

Isolated Children's Parents' Association
of Australia Incorporated



Minutes

of the

52nd Annual Conference

'Unique Land, Unique Learning'

26 & 27 July 2023

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Esplanade
Darwin, Northern Territory

Table of Contents

Index to Motions by Portfolio Areas	4
ICPA Federal Council 2022 - 2023	5
ICPA Federal Council 2023 - 2024	6
Conference Program Day 1 – Wednesday 26 July 2023.....	7
Conference Program Day 2 – Thursday 27 July 2023.....	8
DAY ONE Wednesday 26 July 2023.....	10
Boarding Schools/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio Motions	10
Miscellaneous Motions	21
Training Portfolio Motions	22
Tertiary Portfolio Motions - Access Allowance	24
Tertiary Portfolio Motions - Youth Allowance	25
Tertiary Portfolio Motions - Other.....	28
DAY TWO Thursday 27 July 2023	33
Annual General Meeting	33
AGM Motions	33
Acceptance of the 2022 AGM Minutes	33
Adoption of Financial Statements.....	33
Setting of the 2024 Membership Fees	33
Appointment of Auditor.....	34
Constitutional, By-laws and Policy Motions	34
Election of Federal Council 2023 - 2024	37
AGM Motions continued	38
Conference Venue Motions	38
Distance Education Portfolio Motions	39
Rural Schools Portfolio Motions	42
School Travel Portfolio Motions	43
Communications Portfolio Motions – Telephone.....	44
Communications Portfolio Motions – Internet.....	45
Specific Education Needs Portfolio Motions.....	48
Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions – Early Learning	51
Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions – Childcare	53
Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions – Other	56
Curriculum Portfolio Motions.....	59
Miscellaneous Motions continued	60
Floor Motions	61

CONFERENCE REPORTS	63
FEDERAL PRESIDENT’S REPORT	63
FEDERAL TREASURER’S REPORT	66
NORTHERN TERRITORY PRESIDENT’S REPORT	70
NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT’S REPORT	73
SOUTH AUSTRALIA PRESIDENT’S REPORT	76
QUEENSLAND PRESIDENT’S REPORT	79
WESTERN AUSTRALIA PRESIDENT’S REPORT	83
WEB MANAGER’S REPORT	85
PEDALS EDITOR’S REPORT	87
PORTFOLIO REPORTS.....	89
BOARDING/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME REPORT	89
COMMUNICATIONS REPORT	91
CURRICULUM REPORT	97
DISTANCE EDUCATION REPORT	98
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE REPORT	100
RURAL SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL TRAVEL REPORT	102
SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS REPORT	106
TERTIARY REPORT	109
TRAINING REPORT	115
SPEECHES.....	120
President’s Welcome 2023	120
Opening Speaker	122
Conference Address.....	127
PRESENTATIONS	130
CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE	138
FEDERAL COUNCIL	138
STATE COUNCIL DELEGATES.....	138
BRANCH DELEGATES	138
LONE MEMBER DELEGATES	139
BRANCH OBSERVERS.....	139
STATE COUNCIL OBSERVERS	139
CONVENING COMMITTEE	140
CONFERENCE GUESTS	140
CONFERENCE APOLOGIES	142
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS	144
MEMBERSHIP at 31 May 2023.....	160

Index to Motions by Portfolio Areas

The numbering of motions is as recorded in these minutes - the number following in parenthesis refers to the number as it appeared on the Agenda at Conference, e.g. M15 (A14) refers to motion 15 which was agenda motion 14. "F" stands for floor motion and "S" for supplementary motion.

BOARDING/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME	M1(A1), M2(A2), M3(A3), M4(A4), M5(A5), M6(A6), M7(A7), M8(A8), M9(A9), M10(A10), M11(A11), M12(A12), M13(S1), M14(A13)
COMMUNICATIONS	M59(A17), M60(A18), M61(A14), M62(A15), M63(A16)
CURRICULUM	M80(S2)
DISTANCE EDUCATION	M54(A19), M55(A20)
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE	M68(A21), M69(A22), M70(A23), M71(A24), M72(S3), M73(A25), M74(A26), M75(A27), M76(A28), M77(A29), M78(A30), M79(A31), M84(F1)
RURAL SCHOOLS	M56(A32)
SCHOOL TRAVEL	M57(A33), M58(A34)
SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS	M64(A35), M65(A36), M66(A37), M67(A38)
TERTIARY	M20(A39), M21(A40), M22(A41), M23(A42), M24(A43), M25(A44), M26(A45), M27(A46), M28(A47), M29(A48), M30(A49), M31(A50), M32(A51), M33(A52), M34(A53), M35(A54), M85(F2)
TRAINING	M16(A55), M17(A56), M18(A57), M19(A58)
MISCELLANEOUS	M15(A59), M81(A60), M82(S4), M83(A61)
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	M36(A62), M37(A63), M38(A64), M39(A65), M40(A66), M41(A67), M42(A68), M43(A69), M44(A70), M45(A71), M46(A72), M47(A73), M48(A74), M49(A75), M50(A76), M51(A77), M52(A78), M53(A79)

ICPA Federal Council 2022 - 2023

President

Alana Moller
Clermont QLD

Assistant Secretary

Kate Thompson
York Plains TAS

Publicity Officer (Dec 22-July 23)

Ali Allison
Broken Hill NSW

Committee

Anna McCorkle
Bourke NSW

Committee (Aug 22-Dec 22)

Ali Allison
Broken Hill NSW

Pedals Editor

Hannah Calcino
Brisbane QLD

Membership Officer

Judy Newton
Dubbo NSW

Vice President

Julia Broad
Pentland QLD

Treasurer

Nikki Mahony
Theodore QLD

Immediate Past President

Wendy Hick
Camooweal QLD

Committee

Naomi Obst
Mingenew WA

Committee

Miffy Waugh
Stoneleigh QLD
(co-opted 24.10.2022)

ICPA Website Manager

Sue Shotton
Bamawn VIC

Archivist

Carmel Elliot
Highfields QLD

Secretary

Kim Hughes
Richmond QLD

Publicity Officer (Aug 22-Nov 22)

Suzanne Wilson
Darwin NT (Resigned 12.11.2022)

Committee

Wendy Henning
Glenmorgan QLD

Committee

Laura Stalley
Hillston NSW

Committee

Kylie Toynton
Rocky Glen NSW
(co-opted 24.10.2022)

Webmaster

Nikki Macqueen
Millmerran QLD

ICPA Federal Council 2023 - 2024

President

Louise Martin
Tambo QLD

Assistant Secretary

Shennah Joiner
Primrose Valley NSW

Immediate Past President

Alana Moller
Clermont QLD

Committee

Anna McCorkle
Bourke NSW

Committee

Jennifer Ruska
Julia Creek QLD

Pedals Editor

Hannah Calcino
Brisbane QLD

Archivist

Carmel Elliot
Highfields QLD

Vice President

Julia Broad
Pentland QLD

Treasurer

Nikki Mahony
Theodore QLD

Committee

Wendy Henning
Glenmorgan QLD

Committee

Naomi Obst
Mingenew WA

Committee

Miffy Waugh
Stoneleigh QLD

Webmaster

Nikki Macqueen
Millmerran QLD

Secretary

Kim Hughes
Richmond QLD

Publicity Officer

Ali Allison
Broken Hill NSW

Committee

Kate Thompson
York Plains TAS

Committee

Tracy Alder
Brisbane QLD

Committee

Sally Brindal
Mingenew WA

Membership Officer

Judy Newton
Dubbo NSW

UNIQUE LAND, UNIQUE LEARNING

Conference Program Day 1 – Wednesday 26 July 2023

9.00am	<p>National Anthem Welcome Conference Arrangements Introduction of Delegates and Guests</p> <p><i>Confirmation of the 2022 Conference Minutes</i></p> <p>Official Opening of Conference</p> <p>Federal ICPA President’s Report</p> <p>Northern Territory ICPA President’s Report</p>	<p>Haileybury Rendall School Alana Moller Suzanne Wilson Kim Hughes</p> <p>Julia Broad</p> <p>Hon Fiona Nash Regional Education Commissioner</p> <p>Alana Moller</p> <p>Moira Lanzarin</p>
10.30am	<i>Morning Tea</i>	
11.00am	<p>Boarding/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio Update <i>Boarding/Hostel/Second Home Portfolio Agenda Motions</i></p>	Wendy Henning
11.45am	<p>Presentation <i>‘Boarding School Certification Update’</i></p>	Richard Stokes Australian Boarding Schools Association
Midday	<p>ICPA Aust Membership Officer’s Report</p> <p>Presentation – Federal Life Membership – Judy Newton</p> <p><i>Miscellaneous Motion</i></p> <p>Presentation – Federal Award of Merit – Jane O’Brien</p>	Judy Newton
12.30pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
1.30pm	Keynote Speaker	Tracey Hayes Chair, Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, Chair – Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia
2.15pm	<p>Training Portfolio Update <i>Training Portfolio Motions</i></p>	Anna McCorkle
2.30pm	<p>Presentation <i>Unlocking Opportunities: The Advantages of Tertiary Education for Isolated Rural Youth</i></p>	Elizabeth Gubbins Deputy Principal, Marcus Oldman College
2.40pm	<p>New South Wales ICPA President’s Report</p> <p>Presentation – Farewell to Wendy Hick, Federal Immediate Past President</p>	Tanya Mitchell
3.00pm	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>	
3.30pm	<p>Presentation <i>‘Mugwumps and Mustering: A tale of 5 bush kids who used ICPA for all it was worth’</i></p>	The Sullivan Family
3.50pm	<p>Tertiary Portfolio Update <i>Tertiary Portfolio Agenda Motions</i></p> <p>Introduction of candidates for Federal Council</p> <p>Close of Business Day 1</p>	Kate Thompson
6.30pm	Conference Dinner – Darwin Trailer Boat Club	

Conference Program Day 2 – Thursday 27 July 2023

8.00am	Annual General Meeting Introduction of Delegates	Kim Hughes
9.30am	Conference Resumes Introduction of Guests	Kim Hughes
9.40am	Presentation	Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm Assistant Minister for Education, Australian Government
10.00am	Distance Education Portfolio Update <i>Distance Education Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Ali Allison
	Rural Schools and School Travel Portfolio Presentation <i>Rural Schools Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> <i>School Travel Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Naomi Obst
10.30am	Morning Tea	
	Presentation – Farewell to Laura Stalley, Federal Councillor	
11.00am	South Australia ICPA President’s Report	Belinda Hatcher
11.10am	Communications Portfolio Update	Wendy Hick
	Telstra Presentation	Channa Seneviratne Telstra Executive Technology, Developments and Solutions
	<i>Communication Portfolio Agenda Motions - Telephone</i>	
	NBN Presentation	Gavin Williams Chief Development Officer, Regional and Remote
	Regional Tech Hub Presentation <i>‘Get Connected, Stay Connected’</i>	Kristen Coggan Regional Tech Hub, Communications and Engagement Officer
Midday	Presentation <i>‘Talking Turkey – Rural/Remote Health’</i>	Annabelle Brayley Chair, Community Reference Group, Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
12.10pm	Specific Education Needs Portfolio Update <i>Specific Education Needs Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Laura Stalley
	Presentation – Farewell to Kylie Toynton, Federal Councillor	
12.30pm	Lunch	
1.30pm	Queensland ICPA President’s Report	Wendy Henning
1.40pm	Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Update <i>Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Julia Broad
2.25pm	Curriculum Portfolio Update	Alana Moller
	Presentation <i>‘Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)’</i>	Sharon Foster Executive Director, Curriculum Russell Dyer Executive Director, Assessment and Reporting
	<i>Curriculum Portfolio Motions</i>	

52nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

2.40pm	<i>Afternoon Tea</i> <i>Miscellaneous Motions</i>	
3.00pm	Western Australia ICPA President's Report	Jane Cunningham
3.30pm	<i>Miscellaneous Motions</i> <i>Agenda Motions cont. (if required)</i> <i>Floor Motions</i> Presentations <i>Vote of Thanks and Acknowledgements</i>	
5.00pm	Close of Conference	
7.00pm	Post Conference Function – Crocosaurus Cove	

DAY ONE Wednesday 26 July 2023

9:00am Conference commences

National Anthem

Haileybury Rendall School – Olivia Foster and Emily Campbell

Welcome by Federal ICPA President

Alana Moller

Conference Arrangements

Suzanne Wilson

Introduction of Delegates and Guests

Kim Hughes

Confirmation of the 2022 Federal Conference Minutes

“That the 2022 Federal Conference Minutes as circulated on 6 May 2023 be accepted.”

Moved: Julia Broad ICPA Federal Council

Seconded: Kate Thompson ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

Official Opening of Conference

Hon Fiona Nash
Regional Education Commissioner

Federal ICPA President’s Report

Alana Moller

Join Federal Council Video

Nikki Mahony

Northern Territory ICPA President’s Report

Moira Lanzarin

Boarding Schools/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio Presentation

Wendy Henning

Boarding Schools/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio Motions

M1 (A1) Western Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Minister for Social Services and other relevant government departments for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance for geographically isolated students, to help alleviate financial pressures incurred as a result of increased fees by boarding facilities.”

Moved: Jane Cunningham Western Australia State Council

Seconded: Louise Ford Western Australia State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The cost of boarding in Western Australia continues, on average, to increase by 5% per annum, with some schools increasing by as much as 16.92%. In 2022 the WA State Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) was reduced to the 2010 amount of \$1350 per child. ICPA WA has successfully lobbied to have the BAHA increased in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which has resulted in a \$30 increase per child for 2023. However, this still falls well below the 2017 BAHA of \$2105 per child. Families are continually experiencing increasing financial pressure as the cost of boarding continues to rise.

As stated in media release 15th March 2023, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm has acknowledged that *“The Albanese Government wants to ensure that all Australian’s have access to high quality education and for many families, boarding school is not only the best option for a quality school education experience for their children, it may also be their only option.”*

An increase in the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance would relieve some of the financial burden placed on families to pay for their children’s education.

M2 (A2) Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Education and the Minister for Social Services for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance, to help reduce the gap between costs incurred by geographically isolated families and the Basic Boarding Allowance.”

Moved: Georgina Luckraft Broken Hill (NSW)
Seconded: Fiona Hotchin Tibooburra- Milparinka (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Geographically isolated families not only have to pay boarding fees which are continually increasing, but also face additional, unavoidable and ever-increasing costs of travel and accommodation.

Geographically isolated families often have no choice other than to send their children away for boarding school in the secondary years. Often these schools are hundreds of kilometres and many hours travel from their home. Geographically isolated families face additional costs when they drop off and pick up their children and for weekend visits, especially for compulsory leave weekends, during the term. With the cost of boarding fees, fuel, flights and accommodation increasing and the AIC only increasing slightly each year the gap between what geographically isolated families pay to send their children to boarding school and what they receive through the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance is quickly widening.

In recent data collected in a survey conducted of GI families across Australia, over 75% families face a gap of \$5000.00 or more per term.

We understand that the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance cannot cover all costs, but we believe an increase to the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance of at least \$4000.00 per annum would help reduce the gap between actual costs for geographically isolated families and the Basic Boarding Allowance. This would help ensure equity of educational opportunities for families with students living in geographically isolated areas.

M3 (A3) Midwest Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Minister for Education and Minister for Social Services for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance to more closely reflect the real cost of educating geographically isolated students where the only option is to attend a boarding facility.”

Moved: Sally Brindal Midwest (WA)
Seconded: Jasmyn Allen Midwest (WA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

A recent survey of Western Australian Midwest branch members confirmed that the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance of \$2349 per term fails to address the actual costs of sending a child to a

boarding facility. 91% of respondents were in the range of \$5000 - \$10,000 per term, per child deficit when boarding fees, travel costs and overnight accommodation were taken into consideration.

Many of our families reside in locations that have no access to a local high school. The cost of boarding school continues to rise, and our families are faced with very difficult financial decisions as to how they are going to afford to educate their high school aged children and continue to live in their rural community.

An increase to the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance is a much-needed equity allowance to allow geographically isolated children an education as afforded to their urban counterparts and help alleviate the financial burden placed on families to pay for their children's education.

M4 (A4) Richmond Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Minister for Social Services for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance of at least \$4000 and the alignment of the Allowance to the Consumer Price Index: Education sub index to assist geographically isolated students' access to boarding school."

Moved: Louise Martin Tambo (QLD) on behalf of Richmond Branch (QLD)
Seconded: Stacey Ryrie Tambo (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

According to ICPA (Aust) figures, the 2022 the average boarding fees in NSW was \$24,345, Qld \$21,235, SA \$23,304 and WA \$23,315. In 2023 the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance is \$9396 per student per year. Without factoring in boarding fee increases which would have no doubt occurred in the 2023 year, the AIC BBA is not even covering 50% of boarding fees if using these averages as a measuring stick. An increase of \$4000 to the Allowance would see at least 55% of boarding fees covered and assist to counteract the rising costs of living expenses being experienced across Australia. The alignment of the Allowance to the Education sub index would ensure the Allowance did not erode over time and was reflective of the true costs of educational expenses.

Affordable education goes to the heart of rural and remote communities and their sustainability. If geographically isolated families cannot afford to send their children away to boarding school to access a secondary education, we will continue to experience the mass exodus of families from these communities, the impact of which most probably will not be noticed by mainstream Australia until local butcher, grocery stores and supermarket shelves are void of Australian made produce. Access to affordable education does not only affect rural and remote families. It affects the entire country which relies on these families to feed it, and it affects the national economy which is reliant on agricultural exports.

With an estimated 4000 geographically isolated students receiving the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance per year, increasing this allowance to an amount which reflects the actual cost of a boarding school in Australia in 2023 and beyond is a small but sound investment not only for educational outcomes for students but for the entire nation.

M5 (A5) Collarenebri-Mungindi Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) asks the Minister for Social Services to review the guidelines for approving 'Limited Program Schools' to make the program more effective for rural and remote students."

Moved: Tanya Mitchell New South Wales State Council
on behalf of Collarenebri-Mungindi (NSW)
Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The current program guidelines and assessment process is:

(1) The Australian Government's Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme is administered by guidelines published by Services Australia - Centrelink.

Services Australia defines a limited program school in the AIC Guidelines as:

- primary schools where the syllabus and teaching arrangements are specifically geared to meet particular requirements and may be considered limited compared to the general curriculum of the state or territory.
- secondary schools that either:
 - do not offer a full range of years or grades; or
 - do not provide adequate facilities or programs to enable a student to gain a Year 12 certificate or tertiary entrance score; or
 - have a syllabus and teaching arrangements that are specifically geared to meet the needs of a particular student and may be considered limited compared to the general curriculum of the state or territory.

(2) Each year Services Australia writes to the State Departments of Education and provides the definition of a Limited Program School and requests the department provide a list of schools that meets their criteria by November.

Services Australia uses this list to determine if a student would be eligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme and ABSTUDY Allowances operated through Centre link.

- a) Schools do not apply to be included in the list.
- b) For each year, from 2017-2021, two schools in New South Wales have been identified as meeting Services Australia's definition of a Limited Program School.

A limited school should also be assessed according to the syllabus's offered and the health and wellbeing of the students attending the rural and remote school. Video conferencing should not be considered the acceptable way of offering a subject. If you are the only student in the class doing a subject it should not be accepted as offering the subject and points should be awarded under the limited program schools. That student should therefore be eligible for the entitlements under the Limited Program Schools.

What a limited program school is:

Limited program schools either don't:

- offer all year levels or grades
- have facilities or programs for students to get a Year 12 certificate or an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank.

The outcomes to holding this review would be:

- Review all guidelines/criteria of the program
- make the program more workable – these schools are already limited in what they offer
- make the program more inclusive for students who have a disability
- assist rural and remote students who have no other options for gaining an education in their secondary years.

M6 (A6) Walgett Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant federal ministers to include criteria that would ensure the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding and Additional Boarding Allowances are available to students living in or near remote communities such as Walgett, NSW that are identified

as severely educationally disadvantaged, in the “Educate Australia Fair”, Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre Study.”

Moved: Cath Deshon Walgett (NSW)
Seconded: Karen Ricardo Walgett (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Sadly, despite the best efforts of many over the past few decades, there are locations in remote areas of Australia where due to extenuating circumstances, lone High Schools are not able to provide adequate educational opportunities for all students.

While most States recognise the need to offer bypassing of local schools that offer limited programs, others do not. Support for families continues to be ignored, and they continue to leave once their children reach secondary education. Locations that have been identified as severely educationally disadvantaged in the “Educate Australia Fair” Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre Study must have the option of accessing the AIC Boarding Allowance, which will assist families to remain in remote communities.

M7 (A7) Walgett Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the relevant ministers and departments, requesting the new Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program include the following criteria:

1. income limits are substantially higher for the families who reside in remote communities such as Walgett, NSW, who are identified as severely educationally disadvantaged by the “Educate Australia Fair”, Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre Study,
2. the income limits are tapered to recognise the number of children in a family, and
3. not reliant on students receiving any other Commonwealth funding.”

Moved: Cath Deshon Walgett (NSW)
Seconded: Karen Ricardo Walgett (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Australian Government has announced 100 scholarships for low and low to middle income families from regional, rural, and remote areas to assist with boarding school fees and associated costs. The Walgett Branch would like to thank the government for this wonderful opportunity these new scholarships will provide for students.

As this is a Pilot Program with the eligibility criteria yet to be released, it is timely that we urge the Department of Education to a) ensure that the income limits are realistic considering the significant cost of boarding students away from home and that b) priority is given to communities with the most severely disadvantaged children as evidenced by Studies such as the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre Study.

The “Educate Australia Fair” Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre Study lists Rural and remote Australian towns that suffer the greatest disadvantage, with Walgett being the second most disadvantaged on NSW’s list. Evidence of disadvantages such as this should be used to guide the eligibility criteria for such scholarships.

These scholarships must reflect the real impact on income for families boarding children away from home for their education, particularly when several children are away simultaneously. What may appear to be a medium income quickly diminishes when boarding costs are factored in. This is not a cost for families living in larger centres who can access free education. Therefore, income limits

should be higher than what is considered low to medium income in a larger centre. The income limit must also be tapered to consider the number of children in a family.

The eligibility criteria must ensure the inclusion of families residing in small towns who do not meet the requirements for other available Commonwealth funding. This encompasses vital and indispensable services like nurses, teachers, plumbers, electricians, and police families - whose roles are essential in any town's survival.

Again, we are incredibly grateful for the announcement of these scholarships and hope that the government will work with the ICPA to develop fair and realistic eligibility criteria that will assist those in the most disadvantaged areas of remote Australia.

M8 (A8) Westmar-Inglestone Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Education Minister, Social Services Minister and other relevant ministers and departments to recognise rural and remote students as being ‘Vulnerable Persons’ to ensure adequate funding is available to meet the needs of these students and their families.”

Moved: Louise Martin Tambo (QLD)
on behalf of Westmar-Inglestone (QLD)

Seconded: Stacey Ryrie Tambo (QLD)

LOST

Explanation:

There are various Australian Government definitions of a ‘*Vulnerable Person*’ but this terminology can refer to a child who is experiencing disadvantage whilst accessing a *regulated activity* or service related to the disadvantage. A ‘*regulated activity*’ in this sense, is identified as an activity provided to vulnerable persons and child education services is identified as one of these activities.

The intent of this motion is to precipitate momentum towards identification of isolated children and their families/carers as being within this ‘vulnerable’ category. It is after all, the families/carers that will be assessed as to the ‘vulnerability’ of these students/children/persons. We need to attract and retain these ‘vulnerable’ families in rural/remote regions by securing additional funding for the education of their children when they do need to attend boarding school for face-to-face learning.

As we all know, the AIC allowance alone is insufficient to cover the costs of educating isolated children (even for those who are eligible). So perhaps then we, as guardians of isolated children, need to “think outside the square” and potentially open a new funding stream, separate to the education funding space (AIC), to narrow the gap between the current funding provided and the actual cost of educating isolated students.

M9 (A9) Northern Territory State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies relevant ministers to support the removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) for businesses who assist their employees residing in geographically isolated areas, by providing financial assistance to enable their children to attend boarding school.”

Moved: Kiya Gill Northern Territory State Council

Seconded: Moira Lanzarin Northern Territory State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Currently many businesses across remote Australia are faced with the financial challenge of helping to fund the education of employee’s children.

Financial assistance is essential to support families employed in remote areas of Australia as they are unable to afford the exorbitant expenses of sending their children to board for secondary schooling. Families who have no choice but to leave their homes and place of employment to continue their

child's education, simply because they cannot afford the costs of boarding, leaves employers with a hard to fill gap in the remote workplace. These remote and rural workplaces struggle to fill vacancies.

Businesses able to provide financial assistance for boarding and secondary school retain their valuable employees. However, it is these businesses able to offer financial aid that are struck with the added costs of paying Fringe Benefits Tax on the assistance provided.

For example, a business who offers to cover 50% of a boarding school fee that totals \$50,000 will be subject to 47% FBT and pay approximately \$23,500 in tax on top of the \$25,000 of assistance. A total cost of \$48,500 to that employer, almost doubling the costs of their financial support. This is a significant deterrent for any business thinking of offering assistance.

It is most likely that more employers would be able to offer financial assistance to their employees if the FBT was removed. This would help stabilise a rural workforce and keep valuable families in rural and remote Australia.

Employers could increase the employee's salary to "cover" the fee amount but then the employee is taxed depending on their tax rate so they don't receive the full amount.

So effectively the employer pays double, they can claim it as a deduction and claim any GST but still because of the tax it would mean that many employers would not do so.

There are some FBT exemptions for remote areas but they are very limited. One is that employers can provide housing for their employees. The ATO states the reason is because:

- *there is insufficient suitable residential accommodation otherwise available at or near the place where the employee is employed.*

This argument also applies in regard to secondary school options. There are often insufficient suitable secondary school options available in remote areas, so the removal of FBT for employers assisting their employees in educating their children would be beneficial to regional and remote Australians.

Also, if an employee receives a fringe benefit it is not part of their taxable income but is reported in the tax return and is used to calculate income thresholds for Centrelink benefits etc so would affect eligibility for certain benefits.

M10 (A10) Capricornia Branch of the Air (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government to urgently address the negative impacts that the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) Funding model is having on geographically isolated children who are enrolled at non-government schools and reside within boarding school facilities."

Moved: Ainsley McArthur Capricornia Branch of the Air (QLD)

Seconded: Rob McArthur Capricornia Branch of the Air (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

In 2020, the Australian Government introduced the direct measure of income (DMI) to determine the capacity of a school community to contribute financially to the operational costs of their school.

The DMI calculates capacity to contribute (CTC) using the median income of the parents and guardians of the students attending the school, making use of income tax data and other information

held by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) through the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP). **SOURCE:**

<https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/resources/direct-measure-income-dmi-methodology>

The DMI Methodology states that the new DMI funding is intended to ensure more funding flows through to those schools that need it the most, however, there are a number of factors that don't make it an accurate, reliable or an equitable funding model, especially for rural and remote families who rely upon the boarding schools attached to many of the schools in regional areas for the education of their children for secondary schooling.

Since its introduction in 2020, ICPA (Aust) and the Coalition of Regional Independent Schools (CRISA) have lobbied the Federal Government to the fundamental shortcomings and possible flow on effect that the DMI funding model could impose, possible consequences of these effects and how it could stand to affect the education of rural and remote children and financially impact regional outer metropolitan schools across Australia.

<https://icpa.com.au/sites/icpa.com.au/files/inline-files/icpa-aust-submission-to-australian-education-amendment-direct-measure-of-income-bill-2020-provi.pdf>

As per a letter circulated to families during July 2022, by a P-12 school in regional QLD, it has been reported that federal funding accounts for approximately 45% of that particular school's total income; so, in turn, this significant reduction in federal funding has major effects upon the financial position of the school. To counteract this loss, the school has had to develop various strategies to deal with the decline in funding due to the DMI funding scheme. The school projects that the federal funding will fall significantly over the years of 2022-2029. Historically, this school had been able to keep tuition fee rises to a reasonable level due to the fact that federal funding increased by an average of 6.6% per annum over the last four years. However, moving forward under the new funding model any reduction in federal funding can only be replaced by increased tuition fees or by increasing student numbers. To date this school has chosen to increase student numbers over a period of 7 years.

Increasing enrolments - Schools that take this approach could inadvertently place pressure on existing facilities if they are not well positioned to deal with the increased enrolments across both day school and boarding, class sizes would be affected and recruiting extra teaching staff in the current teacher shortage environment could prove difficult.

Increasing Fees - A regional school budget model indicates that if the reduction of funding was to be offset entirely by fee increase this would have to be at a minimum level of 7% per annum for the years 2023 to 2029 – a position that would make education unaffordable for many regional, rural and remote families.

ICPA (Aust) members have reported that their tuition and boarding out of pocket expenses range from \$10,000 to \$30,000 per child per year depending on allowances and scholarships. The cost of boarding is already increasing at an alarming rate and certainly in advance of CPI, so, increased fees caused by the apparent oversight of the effects that this model would have on Geographically Isolated families just exacerbates the financial burden. Safeguards need to be put into place to ensure rural and remote students who attend boarding schools are able to continue their education without the additional burden and cost caused by the loss of such large amounts of funding due to increased fees or worse still, the forced closure of some boarding facilities due to being deemed financially unviable. In the event that increased fees create a fallout from independent schools to government schools it would impact heavily on education expenditure for state governments.

Geographically Isolated students who need to board have fewer choices with regards to the school they attend; they are limited to those schools that have boarding facilities. Rural and Remote families rely heavily on and are the end users of these schools and associated boarding facilities. We are beginning to see and feel the negative impacts that this funding model is placing on the operating budgets of schools and more importantly our children.

Concerns have been raised by parents that the new school funding arrangement is significantly impacting students who board within the boarding facilities attached to negatively impacted regional schools. In Queensland, where the 'Boarding Standard for Australian Schools and Residences' is not mandated, it is concerning that boarding facilities could fall below the 'Standard' and boarding students' welfare be negatively impacted as schools address how to continue to operate in the short term due to the loss of income. It is particularly concerning that the loss of federal funding has coincided with an unprecedented rise in costs of living. The running costs of the boarding arm of these schools have no doubt been scrutinised and reports of boarding budgets being scaled back. Rising food costs are a major cost for boarding schools, when costs are rising and budgets are being scaled back the nutritional quality, quantity and variety of meals provided to boarders are negatively affected. It could be argued that food budgets should in fact need to be increased due to the cost of food, but with many schools engaging with external food service providers and repeated attempts to work with the schools to improve the situation, nothing changes as it all comes down to profit margins. Boarding Schools should be required to at least meet the age-appropriate Australian Dietary guidelines to provide nutrients and energy needs for all adolescents.

<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/australian-dietary-guidelines.pdf>
<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/food-essentials/how-much-do-we-need-each-day/recommended-number-serves-children-adolescents-and-toddlers>

It is imperative that the DMI funding does not affect the health and wellbeing of Geographically Isolated Children whilst attending boarding schools at the cost of schools doing business. Boarding budgets need to be safeguarded and be transparently reported as part of school reporting to ensure that boarding students are guaranteed equitable outcomes by means of academic support & tutoring, reside in safe well-maintained facilities, be supported and supervised by appropriately trained staff at the correct ratio and be provided with a variety of highly nutritional meals to support their adolescent needs to engage in their academics and sporting activities whilst attending boarding school.

M11 (A11) Western Australia State Council

That ICPA (Aust) continues to bring to the attention of the Federal Government the impacts the new 'Direct Measure of Income' funding model is having on geographically isolated students who attend boarding schools, when advocating for increases to the Assistance for Isolated Children Allowance (AIC)."

Moved: Jane Cunningham Western Australia State Council
Seconded: Louise Ford Western Australia State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

In 2022, as part of the Quality Schools reforms, all non-government schools completed the transition from the previous area-based socio-economic status (SES) methodology to the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) to determine the capacity to contribute (CTC) for most non-government schools.

In very simple terms, if a school's CTC score is now lowered as a result of transitioning from SES to DMI, the school's base funding will increase. If CTC is now higher as a result of the transition, the funding of the school will decrease as of 2022.

As a result of using the Direct Measure of Income parameters many schools throughout the whole of Australia will receive a cut to their funding, this is a major concern for boarding families.

In Western Australia, in addition to families incurring increased boarding costs they are also incurring significant increases to tuition fees. Previously, tuition fees have increased by an average of up to 3% however, data from the current school year has shown an increase of tuition of a minimum of double this rate and in some cases 10% and even 20%.

M12 (A12) Capricornia Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance to counteract the increase in costs of educating geographically isolated children at non-government boarding schools due to costs incurred by the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) funding model.”

Moved: Ainsley McArthur Capricornia Branch of the Air (QLD)
Seconded: Rob McArthur Capricornia Branch of the Air (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Where schools have been impacted by the DMI funding and there is no other choice other than to increase fees, the costs of educating a Geographically Isolated child dramatically increases and for many rural families will become unaffordable. The DMI funding model only takes tuition fees of students attending the day school into account whereas for Rural & Remote families there is the added cost of boarding fees plus the often-overlooked associated costs of boarding school that includes travel, overnight accommodation due to living remotely, co-curricular activities, medical costs, siblings’ education costs or distance education costs. Essentially, we already pay more, in order to access an equitable education.

An increase in the AIC to assist with the affordability of education for rural and remote families is necessary to ensure that equitable education is available at regional boarding schools for those children who cannot access secondary education in their area. An increase in the AIC needs to be made available to limit the negative impacts, namely the ever-increasing financial gap that rural families are already facing that will be further exacerbated by possible increases in fees due to the DMI funding model. This financial burden is not limited to the financial cost but more importantly the burden of limiting the education options and opportunities for geographically isolated children. Rural families do not deserve to be blindsided by further increased costs and have their children’s education options disadvantaged further.

M13 (S1) Wentworth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests Services Australia to update their AIC Renewal Form to allow ‘Assessment for Additional Boarding Allowance’ to be selected when students transition from Distance Education to Boarding School.”

Moved: Nerida Healy Wentworth (NSW)
Seconded: Bree Wakefield Wentworth (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Currently, the renewal form sent out to families allows for families receiving AIC for primary school to update the students’ details to transition to boarding school. Whilst this form allows for the easy transition to the new school there is nowhere on the form that allows you to select that you would like to be considered for the Additional Boarding Allowance. There is also no advise as to how you actually submit a request for Additional Boarding Allowance if you are already receiving AIC.

Staff from the AIC Helpline have advised that a simple update to the form would allow families to select this option and save parents from missing out or spending hours trying to follow up how they actually apply for this after sending their child to boarding school.

M14 (A13) Midwest Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government, the Minister for Education and other relevant ministers and government departments to provide funding for students with a disability in residential boarding facilities, so that their needs can be met, and reasonable adjustments and accommodations can be implemented in accordance with The Disability Standards for Education 2005.”

Moved: Sally Brindal Midwest (WA)
Seconded: Jasmyn Allen Midwest (WA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

When a student with a funded disability (e.g., Autism) is enrolled at a school, the school is eligible to apply for schools plus funding or special education funding from individual state-based Departments of Education and federally through the Individual Disability Allocation (IDA) and Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Students with a Disability (NCCD), via their individual system dependant on what type of school they are classified as.

The amount of funding allocated per student is in accordance with their diagnosis and needs. This funding is then dispersed at the schools’ discretion for the purpose of education. A boarding student (24 hours per day, 7 days per week in a school term) receives the same level of funding as a day student.

The boarding house has a duty of care, responsibility, and accountability for the increased needs of a student with a disability. This is inclusive of wellbeing, medical, social, homework/prep education, nutrition, extracurricular school activities such as sports or choir and boarding house excursions, activities, and most of all inclusion to all aspects of boarding regardless of the child’s abilities.

Students with a disability require extra support in their daily lives to reach their full potential. Currently, there is no clarity on whose jurisdiction or agency the needs of a person with a disability fall under in the secondary residential boarding house system.

Access to funding for a person with a disability in a boarding house is not currently provided in any way. For our geographically isolated families, residential boarding is an important continuation of our children’s education.

The relevant bodies included in the shared response to the needs of a person with a disability include the Department of Education, individual state-based government Departments of Social Services and Departments of Education and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). NOTE: The NDIS is not designed to cover the needs of a child in secondary education residential boarding facilities.

Relevant standards and registrations that cover schools’ compliance to meet the needs of a student with a disability include individual State Registration Standards and Compliance for Non-Government Schools and Government Schools, Boarding Standards for Australian Schools and Residences 2015, and the Disability Standards for Education 2005.

We urge you to pass this motion to support students with disability and to ensure their needs are being met in boarding houses across Australia through the provision of funding that offers an equal and inclusive opportunity to education.

Presentation

“Boarding School Certification Update”

Richard Stokes, Australian Boarding Schools Association

Membership Officer’s Report

Judy Newton (online)

Presentation

Presentation to Jane O’Brien, ICPA Award of Merit

Miscellaneous Motions

M15 (A59) ICPA Federal Council

“That ICPA implements a rolling membership model enabling online recurring membership payments.”

Moved: Julia Broad Federal Council

Seconded: Nikki Mahony Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

After investigating the feasibility of introducing online recurring membership payments, we are pleased to say the ICPA website has a ‘recurring payments’ feature which can be switched on at any time and would be a positive move for the future, streamlining the online renewal process for all concerned. This model would mean that members could opt to automatically renew membership every twelve months, receiving an email one month beforehand reminding them that their membership will be automatically renewed and providing the opportunity to cancel the payment if they wish.

Currently, ICPA as an organisation is constitutionally constrained to a fixed membership model, which is mirrored on the website with a membership calendar year of January to December. If the website were to move to an online recurring membership payment model at this time, it would be a very complicated system that would increase potential for human error and the volunteer workload to manage this.

Therefore, it is recommended that in order to provide the recurring membership payment option, it is highly recommended that ICPA move to a rolling membership model with, which would involve the following process:

1) Implementing a rolling membership model:

- a) All online membership renewals would be renewed 12 months from the date of payment and if opting for the recurring payment, would automatically renew when 12 months expires, regardless of what time of year this is. For example, if a member pays membership on 1 March, the membership will be due on 1 March the following year. Considering the timing of many State Conferences and the number of members who currently renew between November and March, this should not change much, if at all.
- b) Changes to state and federal constitutions to accommodate a model where membership is not due at a fixed date of January 1 will need to occur. These changes will be minimal and all constitutions would contain the same wording. It is important to note the following:
 - State EOFY would remain the same.
 - Branches could continue to hold AGMs at the same time.
 - Membership drives could continue to be promoted at the same time.
 - Membership fee changes could still be aligned with the calendar year.

- Membership renewals would, over time be spread out more.
- New members will benefit – they will pay for a 12-month subscription rather than the full fee for, say, two months if they join in October and then ask to renew a month later.
- Manual membership payments through the Branch would still be an option.

Along with streamlining the membership process for members, moving to a rolling membership model will have huge advantages for the ICPA website. It will also mean that many of the functions available to state and federal membership management teams will be usable, significantly reducing the workload of our volunteers. Currently, between November and April exports need to be compiled manually as opposed to pressing one button.

2) Implementing online recurring membership payments

- a) Once the Rolling Membership model is implemented online recurring membership payments could be offered as an option. Members would not be obligated to take up this option.
- b) Online recurring membership payments would reduce issues around renewing, as memberships will be automatically updated.
- c) The change to recurring membership payments will also simplify processes for ICPA Council volunteers, including treasurer's, membership officers and other personnel who manage membership and the database.

Presentation

Presentation to Judy Newton, ICPA Federal Life Membership

Keynote Speaker

Tracey Hayes

Chair, Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility,
Chair, Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia

Presentation

"Unlocking Opportunities: The Advantages of Tertiary Education for Isolated Rural Youth"
Elizabeth Gubbins, Marcus Oldham College

Training Portfolio Presentation

Anna McCorkle

Training Portfolio Motions

M16 (A55) Queensland State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to extend the TAP (Tertiary Access Payment) to include rural and remote Australian Apprentices."

Moved: Anneli Day Queensland State Council
Seconded: Kate Bradshaw Queensland State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Australian Apprentices relocating to undertake training face similar relocation and set up costs (travel, bond/rent, uniforms) as students relocating to undertake study. They are generally school leavers, moving from the family home for the first time with very little financial security. To make apprenticeships more attractive and increase retention rates, it is imperative that apprentices are well supported financially, particularly in the initial stages, of their apprenticeship.

M17 (A56) Queensland State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Australian Government and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to conduct more comprehensive and timely audits of Australian Apprenticeship Support Networks (AASNs) to ensure that the delivery and support intended by the Australian Government is actually received by rural and remote apprentices/trainees."

Moved: Anneli Day Queensland State Council
Seconded: Kate Bradshaw Queensland State Council

CARRIED**Explanation:**

With a nationwide skill shortage, it is imperative that apprentices/trainees are well supported during their apprenticeship. With national completion rates alarmingly low (55%), it is timely for the Federal Government to focus on all stakeholders and review their procedures. Retention needs to be seen as a collective responsibility of all stakeholders. AASNs are integral to ensuring that the sign up, administration and management of apprenticeships occurs. The Qld Government website clearly states that one of the key roles of the AASN is "*to provide advice and support during the apprenticeship*". To ensure this support is ongoing and comprehensive, it is essential that the Australian Government and DEWR conduct more rigorous and timely audits of all AASNs which include gathering feedback from apprentices/trainees and their guardians (those under 18), and face to face follow up within three months after sign up occurs.

M18 (A57) Bourke Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Skills and Training and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, to mandate specialist support structures for regional and rural apprentices/trainees, from within the federally funded Australia Apprenticeship Support Networks (AASNs)."

Moved: Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)
Seconded: Matthew McCorkle Bourke (NSW)

CARRIED**Explanation:**

Within our branch there are many examples of little support, contact or follow-up for apprentices, trainees and their employers once they commence a training contract. It is requested that there be trained rural and remote specialist support staff within the AASNs. These staff must be contactable by employers, trainers and apprentices/trainees in rural and remote areas, and for those who have had to relocate to undertake their on and off the job training.

Assistance for the rural and remote apprentice/trainees requires mandatory actions from the AASNs including (but not limited to) visits to the workplace and/or training facility to check that the apprentice/trainees are being suitably trained, educated and supported; documented semester reviews on all parties involved; knowledge and assistance with state and federal support programs; and follow-up contact and interviews should the apprentice/trainee or employer terminate the contract prior to its completion.

The data collected during and after a traineeship can inform the ongoing improvement of AASN services and the practices of those working with apprentices and trainees. This will assist the growth in completion rates of apprenticeships and traineeships in and from rural and remote areas.

M19 (A58) Tambo Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to add criteria to the Trade Support Loan scheme recognising rural and remote-based apprentices, working in a trade listed on the priority list, as being eligible to get a 30% discount after completion of the trade."

Moved: Louise Martin Tambo (QLD)
Seconded: Stacey Ryrie Tambo (QLD)

Amendment to the motion – Proposed by Anneli Day, Queensland State Council

Delete 'working in a trade listed on the priority list'

Louise Martin, Tambo Branch (QLD) accepted the amendment.

Conference Permission granted for the amendment and the amendment becomes the motion and voted upon.

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to add criteria to the Trade Support Loan scheme recognising rural and remote-based apprentices as being eligible to get a 30% discount after completion of the trade."

Moved: Anneli Day Queensland State Council
Seconded: Kate Bradshaw Queensland State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Trade Support Loan scheme offers a loan to Australian Apprentices that helps meet everyday costs while undertaking training. These loans are a great source of support for apprentices. However, rural and remote based apprentices face additional travel and freight costs when completing their apprenticeships due to distance and isolation. In recognition of completing a trade, listed on the priority list, in a rural or remote area, a further incentive could be added to the trade support loan criteria. Similar guidelines could be adopted from the Queensland Department of Education teacher incentives scheme that recognises rural and remote services. This adjustment to the criteria could not only be of benefit to apprentices but also assist in the attraction and retention of apprentices in rural and remote areas thus boosting local economies. The addition of this higher incentive could also be linked to the existing regional area's postcodes as listed in the Trade Support Loans Rules 2014 legislation.

New South Wales ICPA President's Report

Tanya Mitchell

Presentation

Farewell to Wendy Hick as Immediate Past President

Presentation

"Mugwumps and Mustering: a tale of 5 bush kids who used ICPA for all it was worth."

Sullivan Kids

Tertiary Portfolio Presentation

Kate Thompson

Tertiary Portfolio Motions - Access Allowance

M20 (A39) Clermont Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to relevant federal ministers and government departments that the first payment of the Tertiary Access Payment for rural and remote students relocating to access tertiary studies be expedited to ensure funds are available when upfront relocation expenses are being endured."

Moved: Scott Moller Clermont (QLD)
Seconded: Lizzie Burnett Clermont (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Services Australia website states that the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) is “A payment to help students with the cost of moving from regional or remote areas for tertiary study. Our Branch thoroughly appreciates the Tertiary Access Payment now available for eligible students however we harbour concerns that currently the first payment of the Tertiary Access Payment is not paid to students until 42 days (six weeks) after the qualifying tertiary course commencement date.

Given the costs associated with relocating are endured before the course commences, it seems incongruous that a payment designed to assist with the costs of relocating are not available to students when they are actually doing so, with the waiting period to be deemed eligible and to receive this assistance being well after these costs must be met.

This is a concern as it may result in students not being able to afford those upfront costs regardless of their eligibility and in turn meaning they either must find other sources of funding to assist with their relocation costs or in a worst case scenario will not be able to commence their course in the year after completing year 12 which would then render them ineligible for the TAP. Our branch understands that the Relocation Scholarship is available to students at the commencement of their course.

Our Branch wish to see a system in place whereby part of the funding can be paid to students at least at the start of their course, or alternatively sooner, such as when their enrolment in the course is confirmed, to ensure assistance is available for the upfront costs of relocating.

Tertiary Portfolio Motions - Youth Allowance

M21 (A40) Walgett Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to change the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to include all students from remote areas relocating who do not qualify for Youth Allowance.”

Cath Deshon, Walgett (NSW), requested conference permission to withdraw the motion.

Conference permission granted.

WITHDRAWN

Explanation:

There are instances where students take a gap year after year 12 with the aim of earning enough to qualify for Independent Youth Allowance before moving away from home to commence their university degree.

Despite their best efforts and often due to circumstances beyond their control (such as drought, no harvest, economic downturn, or pandemics) their capacity to earn money may be limited. As a result, earnings fall short of the requirements to meet the Independent Youth Allowance criteria.

They struggle to meet living costs, let alone save to relocate hundreds of kilometres to university. These students are moving from remote or very remote areas like Walgett to the city or possibly interstate, which is a substantial burden on their family's financial circumstances.

The Relocation allowance would give them the opportunity and time to move, settle and commence studies before seeking employment to subsidise their living costs away from home.

M22 (A41) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant federal ministers to change the criteria of the Relocation Scholarship so that tertiary students from remote and rural areas, who are not eligible to receive other student allowances, still receive the Relocation Scholarship if they are leaving home to study.”

Amanda Bell, Bourke (NSW), requested conference permission to withdraw the motion.

Conference permission granted.

WITHDRAWN

Explanation:

Tertiary students who are eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance are also able to apply for the Relocation Scholarship which is a welcome injection of funds for any student having to leave the principal place of residence and set up a new place to live to attend Tertiary studies. However, it is not available to students who are deemed independent or not eligible for any other allowance. The meaning of relocate is 'to move or to establish in a new place'. Regardless of whether a student is eligible to receive certain student allowances, they are still relocating. This scholarship was established to ensure students who had to undergo a process of relocation would not have the unfair financial burden of a move compared to those who are able to live and study from their family home. It actually means that they are not only unable to access Youth Allowance but are also ineligible for the Relocation Scholarship.

M23 (A42) Western Australia State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government review the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to ensure all geographically isolated students who must relocate from their usual place of residence for the purpose of undertaking post-compulsory studies are eligible."

Jane Cunningham, Western Australia State Council, requested conference permission to withdraw the motion.

Conference permission granted.

WITHDRAWN

Explanation:

In the primary school years assistance for access to education is offered through the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance and a conveyance allowance to access a school bus service or drive directly to school. In the secondary years, the AIC – Boarding and Second Home Allowances assist with the significant financial cost incurred when children are living away from their primary residence to access education. Yet, for many of these families when their children commence tertiary studies there is no assistance unless the child qualifies for Youth Allowance, which is very few.

It is recognised across all levels of government that geographically isolated children face barriers in accessing an appropriate education, and to overcome these barriers involves significant financial contribution. But when it comes to post-compulsory tertiary education our children are not sufficiently catered for.

Having incurred the initial cost of relocating the ongoing costs associated with living away from home can become unmanageable for many families. Rental properties in Western Australia are at a premium and it is extremely difficult to find any shared accommodation below \$250 per week plus utilities. This equates to \$13,000+ per annum urban-based students do not have to fund. Students often seek employment to supplement the cost of living, which can become difficult to navigate with university timetabling, and as a result of the financial burden many rural and remote students fail to complete their studies.

The requirement for a student to be receiving Youth Allowance to access the Relocation Scholarship is disadvantaging rural and remote students.

For many geographically isolated students the barrier in accessing Youth Allowance and hence relocation scholarships, along with other such scholarships, is impacted by being able to provide evidence of financial need. Children do not have a choice where their parents live and yet they are

continually being disadvantaged because of this. Urban children do not need to find accommodation and other associated costs to attend university, but it is a necessary cost for geographically isolated families. Evidence of being geographically isolated should be sufficient, for example, qualifying for receipt of the AIC should also be deemed a component of the qualifying eligibility criteria.

Ineligibility for Youth Allowance is a major barrier in accessing a range of financial supports for geographically isolated families who face financial barriers that their urban counterparts do not.

M24 (A43) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to change the criteria for gaining Independent Youth Allowance so that rural and remote students who have to leave home to study at tertiary level, and are not eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance, are eligible for Independent Youth Allowance as soon as they commence the tertiary course of their choice.”

Amanda Bell, Bourke Branch (NSW), requested conference permission to withdraw the motion.

Conference permission granted.

WITHDRAWN

Explanation:

Students who are unable to access Youth Allowance due to the Parental Means Test are having to support themselves until they prove they are independent. The Parental Means Test is not indicative of what income is available to support the family. We are not wanting to include students moving out of home because they feel like moving. The students we represent move hundreds of kilometres to major regional centres or cities and pay inflated rent and utilities for accommodation near their university. Having to move so far away from the family home and set up a second home is a fair indication that these students are the very ones that should be eligible for Independent Youth Allowance. They then have to support themselves through finding work while studying. These students should be focusing on studying their chosen degree. It is great if they find part time employment however finding a job in a new environment and supporting themselves is a major concern. It leads to high dropout rates and increased stress and anxiety on individuals.

M25 (A44) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to change the eligibility criteria for Independent Youth Allowance, so that those rural and remote students who choose to save or invest their earnings during the working period prior to attending university are not disadvantaged by the Liquid Assets criteria.”

Moved: Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

Seconded: Matthew McCorkle Bourke (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Students who choose to save their earnings during their gap year should not be deemed ineligible or disadvantaged because of savings. Many students work hard to save their earnings to buy a car or perhaps equipment to assist with their studies but instead have to use their savings to support themselves and pay rent while attending University. Other students who earn enough to be considered eligible for Independent Youth Allowance but spend everything they earn can be eligible for the Allowance but those who have saved their earnings are not eligible for the Allowance, and therefore not eligible for the Relocation Scholarship, Tertiary Access Payment or Rent Assistance. Instead, they have to use those savings and support themselves for a waiting period or until the money runs out which again may lead to financial strain and dropout rates.

M26 (A45) Katherine Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for the removal of the parental threshold from the Independent Youth Allowance for students applying under rural and remote work criteria.”

Moved: Connie Wood Katherine (NT)
Seconded: Lisa Waugh Kindon (QLD)

CARRIED**Explanation:**

Rural and remote students can be eligible for Independent Youth Allowance before they turn 22 if (i) their parental home is in an inner regional, outer regional, remote or very remote area (ii) they need to move away from your parental home to study and (iii) they have worked since leaving secondary school. Students also need to have either: earned 75% or more of the National Training Wage Schedule rate in any 14-month period or worked at least 15 hours a week for at least 2 years. The current parental threshold is \$160,000 increasing by \$10,000 for each additional dependent sibling.”

Parental income should not enter into Independent Youth Allowance criteria at all. Rural incomes are so fickle, even being given three financial years of parental income to choose from cannot always give these students a fair assessment of the ability of this family to support a tertiary or training student. These students clearly demonstrate independence through working for a least a year and leaving home to study. They take a gap year because they need to be financially independent but that can also place them at risk of being one of the statistics: students who take gap years are less likely to continue to further education. Any hurdles to these rural and remote students qualifying for Independent Youth Allowance, such as parental income thresholds, threatens their tertiary education.

Tertiary Portfolio Motions - Other**M27 (A46) Louth Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Social Services to increase Centrelink Rent Assistance payments for rural and remote students.”

Moved: Tanya Mitchell New South Wales State Council on behalf of Louth (NSW)
Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED**Explanation:**

Obviously regional, remote and very remote children need to factor in rent to their study plans. Rent is the biggest component of a student’s costs and is often prohibitive therefore to study, for example, in a larger city may mean that a student has to work so much that their course suffers. It was pleasing to hear of an increase in rent assistance (maximum rate of rent assistance by 15%) in the recent budget, but further is required for the rural and remote students.

M28 (A47) Hay Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant ministers to continue commitment to the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships Program or replace with a similar program.”

Moved: Michelle Spence Hay (NSW)
Seconded: Sandra Ireson Hay (NSW)

CARRIED**Explanation:**

This Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship Program or similar program needs to be extended beyond the commitment of the 2023 scholarships to benefit rural and remote students in the future.

Children of Hay Branch members, who have commenced Tertiary Studies for the first time in 2023, had tried to apply for the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship through the QTAC web site since February 2023. Unfortunately, when they have accessed the web site the information only showed the previous 2022 Scholarships. After phone calls to the QTAC office they had been told that the government funds have not been received to fund this program yet and to check back on the web site for updates. Fortunately, just when the first trimester of university was nearly complete in May 2023, they were alerted that the Scholarship round had opened. We are thankful that this scholarship is available for 2023.

However, tertiary students, especially those who have done a year or two working since school and don't qualify for the Tertiary Access Payment have budgeted on receiving this funding (as other students or siblings have received it in previous years) for the duration of their course. They need a firm commitment that these funds will be available as they struggle with the financial commitment of accessing university away from the family home.

M29 (A48) Tasmania Branch (TAS)

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the relevant ministers and government departments extend the current scheme to reduce the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt for teachers, to include teachers who commit to teaching in rural and remote Australia not just very remote Australia."

Moved: Edwina Campion Tasmania (TAS)
Seconded: Andrew Waugh Kindon (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

The current initiative that either waives the indexation on accumulated HELP debt or reduces the accumulated HELP debt for teachers who commit to working in very remote areas of Australia is appreciated. This initiative must be extended to teachers who commit to teaching in rural and remote areas as well to assist in the current issues around recruitment and retention of teachers in rural and remote Australia.

Incentives like this measure would go a long way to encouraging teachers to consider teaching in these areas and must include teachers who are teaching in early childhood education, preschool, primary and secondary schooling.

M30 (A49) Alpha Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the relevant ministers and government departments extend the current scheme to reduce Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt for rural doctors and nurse practitioners to include all health professionals who work in rural, remote or very remote areas of Australia including those who work with geographically isolated children with specific education needs."

Moved: Sarah Bridgeman Alpha (QLD)
Seconded: Scott Moller Clermont (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

While we applaud the Federal Government for recognizing the importance of having qualified doctors and nurse practitioners in areas that are sometimes a very long way from medical services, we believe that nurses, physios, speech pathologists, psychologists and many other health professionals also need to be living in rural and remote areas as well to fully understand the needs of their client base and provide an essential service.

If this incentive were offered to all health professionals, we would see a reduction in patient travel to big cities as there would be much more chance of seeing a qualified professional not so far from home. We don't believe that this offer needs to be extended to all professions who have Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts as for instance seeing a solicitor, accountant, surveyor or a banker can certainly happen on a yearly basis and can be planned, whereas health emergencies and health problems cannot.

It is a well-known fact that a Speech Pathologist plays a pivotal role in the identification and management of specific needs issues in children which will enable educational development. In a rural area, while not defined as a "health care emergency", a delay in seeking the help and advice of a Speech Pathologist is having a profound impact on these student's education and many families in rural areas simply cannot afford to travel with their children to big cities for face-to-face consults and therefore they miss out completely. HELP debt relief for all health professionals would certainly be useful in recruitment and retention of these workers for the benefit of geographically isolated children.

This motion is dual purpose- not only will it encourage health professionals to work in rural and remote areas, it will also persuade the young people who grew up in such areas to gain qualifications as health professionals and come back to work in their familiar environments. It is common knowledge that people who grow up in regional and remote areas are pre-disposed to returning to these areas for work once they graduate, if the opportunities exist.

M31 (A50) Collarenebri-Mungindi Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and the Minister for Skills and Training to ensure that HECS debt repayments are forwarded by employers and applied each time it is deducted from the employees' wage to assist rural and remote graduates in the repayment of their HELP debt."

Moved: Tanya Mitchell New South Wales State Council on behalf of Collarenebri-Mungindi (NSW)
Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

At the moment those people who are paying back HECS debts are only having the payment applied to their debt each six months, whilst the payment is being deducted each fortnight from their wage. On the 1st June 2023 the HECS Debt owing is being indexed by 7.1%. This is the highest indexation in 11 years. It is unfair for the amounts being deducted from wages to not be attributed immediately to the HECS Debt. With the already high cost of living for everyone this indexation is creating greater financial struggles for those still paying off a HECS Debt. Over a 10 year period this indexation would add \$12 084 to a \$50 000 HECS Debt.

M32 (A51) Alice Springs Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government and relevant ministers to support the inclusion and availability of 'Certificate IV in School Based Education Support' in all tertiary institutions across all States and Territories in Australia to assist geographically isolated distance education Home Tutors."

Moved: Samantha Selmes Alice Springs (NT)
Seconded: Danyelle Haigh Alice Springs (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

NT ICPA have been working in conjunction with Charles Darwin University to write and deliver a new course; a Certificate IV in School Based Education Support (course code CHC40221).

This ensures that Home Tutors/parents who are employed to teach our children that are enrolled and studying in schools of distance education can obtain formal recognition for the outcomes they achieve in delivery of lessons in these remote school rooms.

The Alice Springs ICPA Branch would like to see all states and territory ICPA branches support the National roll-out of this Tertiary Course as it provides pathways for Home Tutors to live and be employed in remote Australia while studying and working towards obtaining a Certificate IV in School Based Education Support.

This new course that is being delivered via Charles Darwin University equates to 40 credits towards a degree in Education. People that are partaking in this current trial of the course, will have formal recognition of the role they fulfil as a Home Tutor when they finish employment at the end of the school year.

M33 (A52) Walgett Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the relevant ministers and Universities Australia continue to work with universities and other educational providers to help make Diplomas and Early Childhood Degree’s more accessible and achievable in order to address the severe shortage of Early Childhood Educators in rural and remote areas.”

Moved: Cath Deshon Walgett (NSW)
Seconded: Karen Ricardo Walgett (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Universities, TAFE and other educational providers need to continue to be able to provide a variety of affordable flexible pathways (such as School Based traineeships, TAFE, Open Universities etc.) to gaining a Diploma or Degree in Early Childhood.

Early Childhood degrees are lengthy and often expensive degrees. These degrees need to be flexible and at least partially subsidised by the government. With the high cost of living, it is very difficult to study and support oneself, especially with the huge cost of rentals and campus accommodation.

We would like to acknowledge and thank those universities and other providers that are offering flexible and accelerated pathways for students to gain the necessary qualifications to become an ECE. Accelerated Early Childhood Degree’s such as that offered by the University of Wollongong as an example, are a great way of encouraging people into the industry. These degrees, however, need to be incentivized and flexible for those wanting to further their education.

M34 (A53) Tasmania Branch (TAS)

“That ICPA (Aust) urges the Federal Government to implement the recommendations from the *Education in remote and complex environments Report* relating to rural and remote tertiary students.”

Moved: Edwina Champion Tasmania (TAS)
Seconded: Andrew Waugh Kindon (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Rural and remote students continue to face many barriers in their pursuit of a tertiary education and these have been highlighted in reviews that have been undertaken nationally. The *Education in*

remote and complex environments Report recommended that the government announce an implementation plan for the recommendations and actions from the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education* (Halsey Review) and *National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy* (Naphthine Review). The reports have recommended measures that would improve the pathway of tertiary education for rural and remote students. While some measures that have been implemented including the Tertiary Access Payment, the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships, the Regional University Centres and improvements to the Fares Allowance have benefited and been greatly appreciated by rural and remote tertiary students, other recommendations from the *National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy* (Naphthine Review) need to be implemented to ensure improved participation, achievement and affordability for rural and remote students aspiring and undertaking tertiary education.

Implementation of all the recommendations would make a significant difference including:

- the access to Youth Allowance as an independent for rural and remote students who successfully complete their first year of tertiary study externally if they relocate to continue study for a further minimum of one year,
- the reduction of the earnings required for rural and remote students who are qualifying for independent Youth Allowance under the Concessional Workforce test and
- the review of the changes to the parental means test cut-offs for independent Youth Allowance under the Concessional Workforce test.

M35 (A54) Queensland State Council

“That ICPA Qld requests that ICPA (Aust) thanks the Federal Government for its ongoing commitment to the Country Universities Centre (CUC) program for which is making a substantial, proactive contribution to the completion of post compulsory years education in rural and remote areas.”

Moved: Anneli Day Queensland State Council
Seconded: Kate Bradshaw Queensland State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

ICPA Qld acknowledges the value of these facilities in rural and remote areas to provide students with options to study close to home and we hope to see the program continue to expand.

Presentation

Alana Moller, stepping down from ICPA Federal President

Introduction of Nominations for Federal Council

Jack Beach

Conference Arrangements

Suzanne Wilson

Close of Conference Day One

DAY TWO Thursday 27 July 2023

8:00am Conference Resumes

Welcome by Federal President

Alana Moller

Annual General Meeting

AGM declared open

Introduction of Delegates in attendance

Kim Hughes

AGM Motions

Acceptance of the 2022 AGM Minutes

M36 (A62) ICPA Federal Council

“That the Minutes of the 2022 AGM as circulated on 6 May 2023 be accepted.”

Moved: Julia Broad Federal Council

Seconded: Kate Thompson Federal Council

CARRIED

Federal Treasurer’s Report

Nikki Mahony

Adoption of Financial Statements

M37 (A63) ICPA Federal Council

“That the 2022 - 2023 Audited Report be received and accepted.”

Moved: Nikki Mahony Federal Council

Seconded: Miffy Waugh Federal Council

CARRIED

Setting of the 2024 Membership Fees

M38 (A64) ICPA Federal Council

“That the Federal membership fee be set at \$25.00 per member family for the 2024 membership year.”

Moved: Nikki Mahony Federal Council

Seconded: Miffy Waugh Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Federal Council have opted to hold off on any membership price increases in recent years to alleviate costs for member families. A price rise is required to cover administration expenses and the Federal ICPA publication (Pedals) printing and distribution costs. Federal Council are recommending a small fee increase from \$22 per annum to \$25 per annum for the 2024 year with the hope to hold at this rate steady for three to five years.

M39 (A65) ICPA Federal Council

“That Corporate Membership be set at \$300.00 per organisation for the 2024 membership year.”

Moved: Nikki Mahony Federal Council

Seconded: Miffy Waugh Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

At the 2022 AGM, Federal Council advised they would be holding off any price increase to Corporate Memberships for another year to better establish publication printing and distribution costs. An increase of \$25 per annum is recommended.

M40 (A66) ICPA Federal Council

“That School Corporate Membership be set at \$300.00 per school or educational institution for the 2024 membership year.”

Moved: Nikki Mahony Federal Council
Seconded: Miffy Waugh Federal Council

CARRIED**Explanation:**

At the 2022 AGM, Federal Council advised they would be holding off any price increase to Corporate Memberships for another year to better establish publication printing and distribution costs. An increase of \$25 per annum is recommended.

Appointment of Auditor**M41 (A67) ICPA Federal Council**

“That Queensland Audit Services, be appointed as auditor for the 2023 - 2024 financial year.”

Moved: Nikki Mahony Federal Council
Seconded: Miffy Waugh Federal Council

CARRIED**Constitutional, By-laws and Policy Motions****M42 (A68) ICPA Federal Council**

“That the suggested amendment to Section 6.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution be adopted.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Federal Council
Seconded: Wendy Henning Federal Council

CARRIED**Explanation:**

The deletion of rule 6.7.2 in the Constitution ensures the School Corporate Membership rule is broad and allows for flexibility to meet the needs of all parties regarding where to allocate School Corporate members within the state they are located. Rather than including specific directives in the Constitution for the School Corporate Membership category it is suggested these be included in the ICPA (Aust) By-Laws instead.

M43 (A69) ICPA Federal Council

“That the suggested amendment to Section 11.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution be adopted.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Federal Council
Seconded: Wendy Henning Federal Council

CARRIED**Explanation:**

Federal Council undertook governance training in 2022 which highlighted the need to put more safeguards in place to ensure all member bodies of the Association are aware of the need to remain

solvent in order to operate therefore this additional rule is recommended, hence the suggested addition of Rule 11.7.

M44 (A70) ICPA Federal Council

“That the suggested amendment to Section 19.1 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution be adopted.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Federal Council
Seconded: Wendy Henning Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Following recent governance training and Federal Council discussions around ensuring the Federal Council structure and processes are appropriate and effective, Federal Council suggests an amendment to the Constitution which reduces the number of Executive positions and increases the number of committee positions which make up the Federal Council. Namely this amendment would see the position of Publicity Officer become a committee position rather than an Executive role. Federal Council believes this modification ensures a healthy balance of Executive to committee ratio and reflects roles and responsibilities, ensuring optimal operation and effectiveness of the Council.

M45 (A71) ICPA Federal Council

“That the addition of a new Rule 19.10 to Section 19.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution be adopted.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Federal Council
Seconded: Wendy Henning Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

It is suggested that this Rule be moved from the 18.0 Annual Subscription section to the 19.0 Management section as it is more relevant to management of the Association rather than Annual Subscriptions.

M46 (A72) ICPA Federal Council

“That the suggested amendment to Section 32.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution be adopted.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Federal Council
Seconded: Wendy Henning Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The requirement for a common seal is no longer included in the Model Rules for Incorporated Associations in WA, therefore it is recommended Rule 32.1 is removed to ensure the Constitution remains up to date.

M47 (A73) ICPA Federal Council

“That the suggested amendment to Section 7.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution be adopted.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Federal Council
Seconded: Wendy Henning Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Suggested amendments to Rules 7.1 and 7.3 will reflect and support the change from a fixed membership model to a rolling membership model.

M48 (A74) ICPA Federal Council

“That the suggested amendments to Section 18.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution be adopted.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Federal Council
Seconded: Wendy Henning Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

These amendments to Rules in Section 18.0 will reflect and support the change from a fixed membership model to a rolling membership model.

M49 (A75) ICPA Federal Council

“That the amendments to the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) By-Laws, as circulated, be ratified.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Federal Council
Seconded: Wendy Henning Federal Council

CARRIED

M50 (A76) ICPA Federal Council

“That the suggested amendments to the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Distance Education Policy be adopted.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Federal Council
Seconded: Wendy Henning Federal Council

CARRIED

Suggested amendments:

ICPA seeks a distance education service for ~~Foundation~~ Early Childhood Education – Year 12 rural and remote students including services delivered by schools of distance education and Schools of the Air (SOTAs).

Explanation:

ICPA (Aust) suggests the update of the policy statement for the Distance Education Portfolio to ensure that language used reflects current terminology and to ensure it is evident that the policy applies to students and schools across all of Australia.

M51 (A77) ICPA Federal Council

“That the suggested amendments to the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Specific Education Needs Policy be adopted.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Federal Council
Seconded: Wendy Henning Federal Council

CARRIED

Suggested amendments:

ICPA seeks equity of access and opportunity to appropriate ~~educational~~ services and facilities to identify and assist children from rural and remote areas who require support for ~~have~~ specific educational ~~learning~~ needs.

Explanation:

While it is imperative educational services and facilities are adequate to assist students with Specific Education Needs, this extends to Allied Health Services, Specialists and other services and facilities as well. The proposed edits ensure that the policy statement is broadened to encompass more services and facilities.

Election of Federal Council 2023 - 2024

All positions declared vacant and the Returning Officer Jack Beach took the chair for the election of officers.

President	Louise Martin Nominated: Seconded:	Tambo Branch QLD Kimberley Rains Stacey Ryrie	Tambo Branch QLD Tambo Branch QLD DULY ELECTED
Vice President	Julia Broad Nominated: Seconded:	Charters Towers Branch QLD Sonia Spurdle Maxine Sharpe	Charters Towers Branch QLD Charters Towers Branch QLD DULY ELECTED
Secretary	Kim Hughes Nominated: Seconded:	Richmond Branch QLD Sarah Bridgeman Louise Martin	Alpha Branch QLD Tambo Branch QLD DULY ELECTED
Assistant Secretary	Shennah Joiner Nominated: Seconded:	Monaro Branch NSW Tanya Mitchell Irene Lund	Bourke Branch NSW NSW/VIC Lone Members DULY ELECTED
Treasurer	Nikki Mahony Nominated: Seconded:	Dawson Valley Branch QLD Sarah Cox Nikki Macqueen	Dawson Valley Branch QLD Kindon Branch QLD DULY ELECTED
Publicity Officer	Ali Allison Nominated: Seconded:	Broken Hill Branch NSW Julia Broad Naomi Obst	Charters Towers Branch QLD Midwest Branch WA DULY ELECTED
Ex-Officio Immediate Past President		Alana Moller Clermont Branch QLD	
COMMITTEE	Kate Thompson Nominated: Seconded:	Tasmania Branch TAS Sarah Fisher Edwina Campion	Tasmania Branch TAS Tasmania Branch TAS DULY ELECTED
	Wendy Henning Nominated: Seconded:	Westmar-Inglestone QLD Nikki Mahony Miffy Waugh	Dawson Valley Branch QLD Taroom-Wandoan Branch QLD DULY ELECTED
	Anna McCorkle Nominated: Seconded:	Bourke Branch NSW Laura Stalley Tanya Mitchell	Hillston Branch NSW Bourke Branch NSW DULY ELECTED

COMMITTEE	Naomi Obst Nominated: Seconded:	Midwest Branch WA Sam Messina Laura Stalley	Midwest Branch WA Hillston Branch NSW DULY ELECTED
	Jennifer Ruska Nominated: Seconded:	Julia Creek QLD Sarah Bridgeman Louise Martin	Alpha Branch QLD Tambo Branch QLD DULY ELECTED
	Sally Brindal Nominated: Seconded:	Midwest Branch WA Jane Cunningham Hollie Williams	Lakes District Branch WA Marla Oodnadatta Branch SA DULY ELECTED
	Miffy Waugh Nominated: Seconded:	Taroom-Wandoan QLD Julia Broad Nikki Mahony	Charters Towers Branch QLD Dawson Valley Branch QLD DULY ELECTED

Vote of thanks to Jack Beach as Returning Officer

AGM Motions continued

Conference Venue Motions

M52 (A78) New South Wales State Council

“That ICPA NSW hosts the 2024 Federal Conference in Sydney on 24 and 25 July 2024.”

Moved: Tanya Mitchell New South Wales State Council
Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED by Acclamation

M53 (A79) South Australia State Council

“That ICPA-SA hosts the 2025 Federal Conference in South Australia.”

Moved: Kirsty Williams South Australia State Council
Seconded: Lisa Slade Flinders Ranges (SA)

CARRIED by Acclamation

Web Manager’s Report

Sue Shotton

Pedals Editor’s Report

Hannah Calcino

Call for any other AGM business: nil

9:20am Close of AGM

Conference Resumes

Welcome by Federal ICPA President

Alana Moller

Introduction of Guests

Kim Hughes

Conference Arrangements

Suzanne Wilson

Presentation

Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm
Assistant Minister for Education, Australian Government

Distance Education Presentation

Ali Allison

Distance Education Portfolio Motions

M54 (A19) CONJOINED MOTION presented by: Western Australia State Council, Alice Springs Branch (NT), Far North Queensland Branch (QLD), Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA), Katherine Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Minister for Social Services, the Minister for Education and all other relevant government departments to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role Home Tutors play in educating geographically isolated students via distance education.”

Moved: Connie Wood Katherine (NT)
Seconded: Katie Hall Goldfields Eyre (WA)

CARRIED

Explanation Western Australia State Council:

Repeatedly states are advised to advocate for this Allowance to be implemented at a state level. Whilst we absolutely support the intention of DETA and would embrace its introduction WA members feel that dealing with this at the state level could detract from the importance of such an Allowance and potentially leave a situation where some states have a version of DETA and others do not.

The argument from the Federal Government is that the deliverance of education is a state’s responsibility. That responsibility is being borne by the state through the deliverance of education utilising distance education and School of the Air.

Each eligible child, who boards away from home, is afforded a Federal Allowance (AIC) from the Federal Government to assist with the cost of boarding, as boarding is a necessity for those children to have equitable access to an appropriate education. Children who access distance education through School of the Air are no different. Instead of boarding away from the family home, these students, due to their age, are reliant on Home Tutors as a necessity for equitable access to an appropriate education.

We feel that Federal ICPA representing all states on this issue will if DETA is adopted, support ICPA members fairly across Australia.

Explanation Alice Springs Branch (NT):

An introduction of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), as financial recognition of the essential work a supervisor/Home Tutor performs in Distance Education classrooms, would help alleviate the pressure placed on remote families, whose only option is to home-school their children

via Distance Education. It is a government requirement under the Distance Education Schools Guidelines that students enrolled in Distance Education schools have appropriate supervision, and these guidelines state that this may be an employee or parent. In many cases, a parent, usually the mother, is forced to forgo paid work on the property, community or outstation where they live, due to the need for them to stay home and teach their children. This in turn strips the family of a second income, and places further financial pressure on families who educate their children via Distance Education. This can amount to a family paying a Home Tutor between \$25,000-\$50,000 per year, depending on salary/wage agreements. On top of the wage a Home Tutor is paid, in many cases, Home Tutors are also living with the family, and have all food, board and other sundry expenses such as internet, paid by the family as part of their wage package. If the family employs a Home Tutor to deliver Distance Education lessons and provide support and supervision, the family is effectively paying award wages for a child to receive a public education.

We would like to suggest that DETA be incorporated into the existing AIC framework. If a family is eligible for AIC, it is extremely likely that they would also be eligible for DETA, and combining DETA into the AIC would streamline the application process.

Explanation Far North Queensland Branch (QLD):

Far North Queensland Branch thanks ICPA (Aust) for the work they have done advocating to the Federal Government for the establishment of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA). Like many ICPA Branches across Australia, our long-term and new members are familiar with the strong advocacy of ICPA (Aust) on this issue over many years.

We support the position of ICPA (Aust) that this situation requires a collaborative and consistent approach involving both state and national levels of government and our Branch has put forward a similar motion to the ICPA Queensland State Conference requesting ICPA Qld lobby the state and federal governments on this issue.

Many of our members have spent tens of thousands of hours as Home Tutors teaching their children through distance education. Like many roles in rural and remote properties, the role of Home Tutor often falls on mothers. Due to dedication to their children, and by necessity, they often forego their own earning potential and careers, to ensure their children have access to an education equal to their city counterparts, an education which is compulsory and supposedly free.

The delivery of distance education is not possible without the commitment of Home Tutors. It is a full-time job. Some geographically isolated families may employ a tutor or governess to perform the Home Tutor role, but this comes at considerable cost and finding a governess/tutor is often difficult in isolated areas.

Consideration must be given to the burden on approximately 1,500 families in geographically isolated areas for whom distance education is the only option to educate their children. The vital role of the Home Tutor should be remunerated through an allowance, which recognises the essential work they perform.

Explanation Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA):

The service provided by Home Tutors in the delivering of education to students in rural and remote Australia who have no choice but to be educated via the distance education mode of delivery needs be acknowledged. Home Tutors provide what the government simply cannot cost effectively supply and as such should be recognised and remunerated fairly.

Explanation Katherine Branch (NT):

Katherine Branch thanks ICPA (Aust) for your continuing pursuit of this motion and considers the

Distance Education Resource Video to be a great resource illustrating the commitment of Home Tutors to education and the challenges faced by families on distance education. For many young people living in remote regions, their only access to education is to study by distance education. It is clear that distance education provision is provided on the assumption that all children have ready access to a person able to deliver the program in the geographically isolated classroom. This person is the distance education tutor who must be available and able to provide the practical, day-to-day supervision and support required for the effective delivery of a distance education program. With the responsibility of the distance education tutor position often falling on the mother, fulfilling this position further compounds her workload. This can place increased pressure on other family members and may necessitate the employment of additional staff.

M55 (A20) Northern Territory State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) use the existing precedence of Centrelink Jobseeker payment being available to single principal carer with exemption from mutual obligation requirements because they are a home or distance educator of child/ren in their care, and investigate its possible application, adaption and or leverage for the creation of an applicable Distance Education Tutor Allowance for geographically isolated families.”

Word Change: Kiya Gill, Northern Territory State Council, requested conference’s permission for a word change to remove ‘use’ and add ‘investigate’ and remove ‘investigate.’

Conference permission granted.

“That ICPA (Aust) investigate the existing precedence of Centrelink Jobseeker payment being available to single principal carer with exemption from mutual obligation requirements because they are a home or distance educator of child/ren in their care, and its possible application, adaption and or leverage for the creation of an applicable Distance Education Tutor Allowance for geographically isolated families.”

Moved: Kiya Gill Northern Territory State Council
Seconded: Moira Lanzarin Northern Territory State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

“Australian Government Social Security Guide, version 1.307, released 8 May 2023, at 5.1.8.20 Common benefit rates” describes a payment for a “Single principal carer with an exemption from mutual obligation requirements EITHER: because of caring for large family or foster child/ren, OR who is a home or distance educator of child/children in their care.” This is currently \$949.30 per fortnight.

It is payable to Jobseeker Payment (JSP) recipients who have an exemption from mutual obligation requirements under paragraphs 40P(2)(a) or (b) of the SS(Admin)Act.

Source: <https://guides.dss.gov.au/social-security-guide/5/1/8/20>

Act reference: SSAct section 1068 Rate of JSP, section 1068-B5 Maximum basic rate for certain JSP recipients.

SS(Admin)Act section 40P Caring responsibilities

Policy reference: SS Guide 5.1.4.10 PP - current rates, 3.7.1.80 Determining the rate of SpB

It appears that to be eligible as it currently stands, one needs to be eligible for Jobseeker payment and be a single parent plus looking after a large family (4 or more under 16 years) OR teaching via home-schooling or distance education.

This Centrelink payment is an acknowledgement by the Federal Government that being a home or distance educator of a child is equivalent to full time work and has a value.

Benefit rates

This table shows the basic rates in dollars per fortnight (pf) as at 20 March 2023*. Current rates can be found in the [A guide to Australian Government payments booklet](#) on the [Services Australia](#) website.

Recipient status			Rate (\$ pf)
Single	no children	22 or over	693.10
Single	with children	-	745.20
Single	no children	60 or over after 9 months	745.20
Single principal carer with an exemption from mutual obligation requirements EITHER: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> because of caring for large family or foster child/ren. OR who is a home or distance educator of child/ren in their care. 	with children	-	949.30#
Partnered	without children	-	631.20
Partnered	with children	-	631.20
Partnered - illness separated couple (1.1.I.04), respite care couple (1.1.R.240), or partner in gaol (1.1.P.85)			745.20

Example of single with children: JSP recipient with dependent YA child under 18 years.

*The maximum rate of payment may be higher if the person is eligible for supplementary payments (see below) in addition to the basic rate.

This amount is equal to the maximum rate of PPS, including pension supplement, and is payable to JSP recipients who have an exemption from mutual obligation requirements under paragraphs 40P(2)(a) or (b) of the SS(Admin)Act. Recipients may be eligible for such an exemption if:

- they are a registered and active foster carer of a child, or children, for whom they are a principal carer
- they are the principal carer of a large family (4 or more children under 16 years of age)
- they are a home educator of a child, or children, for whom they are the principal carer. OR
- they are a distance educator of a child, or children, for whom they are the principal carer.

Act reference: SSAct section 1068 Rate of JSP, section 1068-B5 Maximum basic rate for certain JSP recipients
SS(Admin)Act section 40P Caring responsibilities
Policy reference: SS Guide 5.1.4.10 PP - current rates, 3.7.1.80 Determining the rate of SpB

Rural Schools/School Travel Portfolio Presentation

Naomi Obst

Rural Schools Portfolio Motions

M56 (A32) Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government for funding to be sought to further incentivise experienced teachers to take up contracts and long term rural, regional and remote positions.”

Moved: Katie Hall Goldfields Eyre (WA)

Seconded: Madeline Wildy Goldfields Eyre (WA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Students from rural, regional, and remote areas are facing, at times constant, disruptions to their education in the form of teacher shortages. Teacher retention in rural areas can be problematic and even in those schools where teachers are committed long term their ability to access vital professional development days, long service leave and even sick days is limited due to the lack of relief teachers and/or support staff available in these areas. It is not uncommon for small schools to have only two classroom teachers across all year levels and minimal funding for additional support staff such as EAs or Library Technicians. Additionally, the mental health of teachers is becoming increasingly worrisome due to their burdensome workload.

The states all have varying incentives to encourage teachers to take up positions in rural schools however it has been our experience that these incentives are not always well advertised and experienced teachers often think these are graduate positions only when they are actually open to all teachers. As well as federal funding we suggest the Federal Government run an advertising campaign to get teachers into the bush pitched at experienced teachers and their families. The Federal Government recently rolled out The Rural Health Outreach Fund (RHOF) and it is our opinion

that a similar campaign and federal funds could be set up to assist the states in making education in rural areas fairer for bush kids.

A federally administered fund could offer extra incentives to teachers and schools such as:

- Financial incentives for short term or contract work in the regions.
- Increased childcare rebates for teachers with young families wanting to take up rural positions.
- Clear potential for permanency/job security for eligible teachers.
- Increased potential for permanency/job security in the city after completing a set amount of time in a rural, regional or remote school.
- Make extra funds available for support/relief staff to rural, remote and regional schools with small student numbers. Decrease the student to teacher ratio and/or ensure teachers aren't asked to teach across too many different year levels.

School Travel Portfolio Motions

M57 (A33) Alice Springs Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant bodies for a ‘Capped Student Fare’ for geographically isolated students attending educational institutions within Australia who need to travel between their home residence and the educational establishment they attend.”

Moved: Danyelle Haigh Alice Springs (NT)

Seconded: Katy Hayes Alice Springs (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Students who fit this Category should be able to book tickets by Air or Road at any point during the year without being subject to inflation caused by peak tourist season, holidays, limited tickets, and any number of other reasons ticket prices fluctuate.

There are geographically isolated families whose children attend school’s interstate or intrastate that have all their travel costs covered and or organised, home to closest airport, then airport to interstate school. There are examples of how such a policy mechanism can work through allowances such as ABSTUDY.

We would like to suggest that this existing framework (used by agencies such as ABSTUDY, to book and secure travel for students) be extended to all geographically isolated families when travelling between their home residence and the educational establishment they attend. At the very least to secure capped student travel fares.

M58 (A34) Walgett Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the relevant federal ministers and the Education Minister to implement a national funding program that would help ensure that no young geographically isolated children are left on childcare, preschool or school buses by installing sensor devices that sense sound and movement, to detect and alert drivers if young children have been left in the vehicle.”

Moved: Cath Deshon Walgett (NSW)

Seconded: Karen Ricardo Walgett (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

There have been numerous incidences that have occurred over the years of children being left on childcare/school buses and it continues to be a big issue. These incidences occur on a far more regular basis than are reported in the media. These incidences have caused distress, heat exhaustion, major physical injury and death.

Whilst thoughtful Policies and Procedures are continually put in place in Schools and Childcare Centres this is not preventing children from being left on busses. There needs to be physical monitoring devices installed in buses to counteract unfortunate human error.

A Sensor Device that monitors sound and movement just like a home monitoring device could be set during the hours that the bus wouldn't ordinarily be transporting children. Alerts could be made to the bus drivers and centres or schools to mobile phones should the sensor detect anything.

Human error is inevitable, we urge the government act on implementing movement monitors as a matter of urgency on all Childcare Centre and School buses.

Presentation

Farewell to Laura Stalley, Federal Councillor.

South Australia ICPA President's Report

Belinda Hatcher

Communications Portfolio Presentation

Wendy Hick

Telstra Presentation

Channa Seneviratne

Communications Portfolio Motions – Telephone

M59 (A17) Queensland State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Communications to ensure all communication providers fulfil their Universal Service Guarantee (USG) obligations in the provision and functionality of essential communication services that are reliable, fit for purpose and are maintained at a fully functioning standard to enable the delivery of rural and remote education.”

Moved: Kasie Scott Queensland State Council

Seconded: Kate Bradshaw Queensland State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Remote communities of Queensland and the Northern Territory recently experienced the failure of essential communication services at critical times and for extended periods, leaving remote families in a state of true isolation. With the inability to fly, drive or even walk to safety, it is critical that these remote areas are protected and supported for both human safety and for the continuum of education.

Case Study 1

This family lost internet and mobile connections due to a flooding event and their landlines had been problematic for some time before the event. The family was evacuated and post the event, the parents returned home to begin recovery clean up while the child remained in town with the Home Tutor. Communication during this time was sporadic with the child's family; however, to ensure minimal disruption to schooling the child and home tutor could not return home until communications had been restored.

Case Study 2

Due to extended rain periods and cloud cover, all communication - mobile/landline/internet - were problematic. Landlines and mobile then became non-operational as batteries that power equipment were not receiving enough sun to remain charged. For the majority of Term 1 the student had little to no contact with their DE teacher and could only attend online lessons sporadically (the internet

would work one day but not the next, or part of one day and due to mobile outage, they could not hotspot to get coverage, either). Systems are now working well in Term 2.

M60 (A18) Katherine Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to request the Minister for Communications to ensure Telstra meets their Universal Service Guarantee of providing quality, efficient, and reliable voice services to rural and remote premises including fixed address pastoral leases, remote communities, and remote roadhouses.”

Word Change: Connie Wood, Katherine NT, requested Conference’s permission for a word change to remove “continues to”, pluralise “requests”, add “insist” and add “by ensuring new USO voice services exceeds a reliability and quality of existing voice services.”

Conference permission granted.

“That ICPA (Aust requests the Minister for Communications to insist ~~ensure~~—Telstra meets their Universal Service Guarantee of providing quality, efficient, and reliable voice services to rural and remote premises including fixed address pastoral leases, remote communities, and remote roadhouses by ensuring new USO voice services exceeds a reliability and quality of existing voice services.”

Moved: Connie Wood Katherine (NT)
Seconded: Sally Sullivan Katherine (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Through the Universal Service Guarantee, Telstra are paid by the Australian Government to ensure all Australians have access to a standard telephone. With the announcement that Telstra would be phasing out the copper landline services in the coming years it’s important that they are replaced with the same quality as provided in metropolitan areas including no delays and interruptions such as those experienced when using satellite phone systems and that these services be efficient and reliable during all Australian weather conditions with appropriate backup power supply to ensure students can access education/schooling. In areas where a mobile network has already been established, it’s important that these are upgraded to current standards such as 4G or 5G.

Any technologies used in RRR areas must be thoroughly tried and tested in all weather and terrain types and come with consumer support and engagement with RRR stakeholders.

Presentation – NBN Co Update

Gavin Williams, NBN Co Chief Development Officer, Regional and Remote.

Communications Portfolio Motions – Internet

M61 (A14) Katherine Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to request the Minister for Communications ensure all rural and remote students have adequate internet access with regard to speed, quality, capabilities and cost of the service.”

Moved: Sally Sullivan Katherine (NT)
Seconded: Connie Wood Katherine (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

We acknowledge and thank ICPA (Aust) and the Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia for their continuous and effective lobbying of the Federal Government, Telstra, nbn™, Starlink and other providers on internet issues in the bush. The prioritisation of installations required

for education is paramount. Many remote families are using the internet provided by the family business. Or are having to pay for it themselves if educational internet data is not part of their employment package. This includes tertiary and training students. Small rural schools and boarding students who've returned home for a period.

While expected data speeds, plan sizes and service reliability are continually improving, our members have concerns about the data allocations in plans being heavily loaded towards unreasonable off-peak times. The Mb/\$ continues to fall extremely short of those available to our urban counterparts, thus ensuring maintenance of the internet divide between regional and urban areas.

Currently many families are paying for two services to ensure reliability whilst undertaking recent internet trials. To ensure there are no disruptions to their children's education, including Home Tudors studying to complete university degrees or TAFE courses.

M62 (A15) Alice Springs Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Communications and the Minister for Education, investigate if all state and territory governments are offering the deliverance and maintenance of a high-speed internet connection to geographically isolated families with children enrolled in Schools of Distance Education and Schools of the Air at no cost to the families."

Danyelle Haigh, Alice Springs NT, requested conference's permission to withdraw A15.

Conference permission granted.

WITHDRAWN

Explanation:

For the past couple of years, The Northern Territory Government (NTG) have been advising Schools of Distance Education, such as Alice Springs School of the Air (ASSOA), should recommend to families who are enrolling at the school, that they would receive a better connection if they organise and supply their own internet such as SkyMuster rather than STARS network; This is the free internet connection the NTG offers to families with a child enrolled on Schools of Distance Education.

The Northern Territory Government have an obligation to all Remote Schools and Schools of Distance Education to provide satellite internet connection. They are able to do this via the STARS network. There is now only a hand full of families in the Alice Springs ICPA Branch who are still able to access the STARS internet connection. These are families who have been enrolled at ASSOA long term. These families experience **no** out of pocket expenses, no ongoing monthly fees, no initial set up costs, no out of pocket expenses for repairs/maintenance – the STARS connection is fully funded and provided by the NTG.

This leads us to the dozens of other families, mostly new enrolments to the school, who have been told they would be better off supplying their own internet service as the STARS network, provided by the NT Government, is not recommended.

Those families are then required to source, cover installation and initial equipment costs, ongoing expenses, repairs, maintenance and technical support all at their own up-front expense. With the option of applying to the NTG for a predetermined subsidy to help cover monthly bills, which doesn't cover the minimal monthly amount available.

How is it reasonable that some of our geographically isolated families face these costs, while other families are having internet supplied into their remote classrooms that is fully funded and maintained by the NT Government via the STARS network.

The subsidy for families who incurred out of pocket monthly internet expenses to provide their own internet did not always exist. The NT ICPA have lobbied the NT Government to provide this subsidy and we have seen increases to this monthly amount over the past couple of years.

The core business of schools of distance education is to deliver a free public education to the most geographically isolated children in Australia. To do so, these families need access to High-Speed Internet without the burden of financial outlay of equipment, monthly connection costs and any ongoing repairs/maintenance.

If respective States and Territories are still using slow and obsolete satellite internet connections for their Schools of Distance Education, then it is time they invest in High Speed, reliable internet for ALL of the families who are currently enrolled at these rural and remote schools and schools of distance education. They should NOT be able to place this responsibility back on the families.

This raises the question, why are families responsible to provide the delivery mechanism (the internet) of education for their geographically isolated children?

It is so disappointing to hear that the NT Government / NT Department of Education are quietly instructing Schools of Distance Education (like ASSOA) to recommend that new families use their own internet connections instead of the FREE service provided and maintained by them.

If the department is supplying a slow internet service to families, they should be accountable to upgrade it – we are talking about our children accessing an education and to do so, they need to be supplied with a good High Speed internet connection.

The Alice Springs ICPA Branch would like to ensure, ALL Children enrolled in Schools of Distance Education have access to High-Speed internet connections for their remote classrooms that is delivered and maintained by their relative state or territory governments with **no upfront or ongoing cost** to the Families.

Extra Information

STARS (internet) = Northern Territory Government is the provider and the responsible entity for the delivery, maintenance, costs etc.

STARS (internet) = Alice Springs School of the Air (ASSOA) is the conduit through which NTG delivers education to geographically isolated children in the remote home school rooms. ASSOA does bear some costs and responsibilities associated to STARS network does not have ultimate responsibility.

M63 (A16) Alice Springs Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Communications and the Minister for Education direct state and territory governments to deliver and maintain a high-speed internet connection to geographically isolated families with children enrolled in Schools of Distance Education and Schools of the Air at no cost to the families.”

Word Change: Danyelle Haigh, Alice Springs NT, requests conferences permission for a word change to remove ‘direct’ and add ‘encourage’

Amendment: Margaret Brock, Mt Isa Branch of the Air, proposed an amendment. Amendment refused.

Conference permission for word change granted.

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Communications and the Minister for Education encourage state and territory governments to deliver and maintain a high-speed internet connection

to geographically isolated families with children enrolled in Schools of Distance Education and Schools of the Air at no cost to the families.”

Moved: Danyelle Haigh Alice Springs (NT)
Seconded: Katy Hayes Alice Springs (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Children who are receiving an education via schools of distance education are faced with a myriad of challenges when it comes to interacting with their teachers and classmates. They complete their daily school lessons, assemblies, sports lessons, private learning assessments, reading tasks, group activities and even singing lessons all via the home school room computer on platforms such as Microsoft Teams, React, Zoom and more.

If states and territories are not providing families (enrolled in Schools of distance Education) with High-Speed internet connection to the home school rooms of these geographically isolated children, they face major disruptions to the quality of their learning experience. Poor connection, sound, images may hamper their daily lessons and cause disruptions for the other children on the lesson.

The ONLY way our children are accessing their public education in these remote locations is via a satellite internet connection. If, over time, this connection has become slow or obsolete, then it is the responsibility of the Department of Education to ensure it is upgraded.

In our case, The NT Government is providing the STARS network for Schools of Distance Education. However, instead of upgrading their internet to a High Speed and reliable service, they are recommending that the schools direct families to supply their own High Speed internet. This is highly distressing and disappointing.

Regional Tech Hub Presentation

“Get Connected, Stay Connected”
Kristen Coggan

Presentation

Annabelle Brayley
Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine

Specific Education Needs Portfolio Presentation

Laura Stalley

Specific Education Needs Portfolio Motions

M64 (A35) Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government and relevant bodies for increased federal funding to improve rural and remote school’s access to specialists who can diagnose students with learning disabilities and offer ongoing education and support to students and their teachers.”

Moved: Katie Hall Goldfields Eyre (WA)
Seconded: Madeline Wildy Goldfields Eyre (WA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Despite the funding that is currently available many small rural schools find it difficult to access professional support for students with intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties. We are asking that the Minister of Education and the Ministers for Health and Aged Care and for Regional Development, local government and territories work together to actively support professionals such as speech therapists and education and mental health specialists to work in regional, rural and

remote schools by providing them with appropriate placements that include accommodation and transport. Funding should be used to incentivise specialists wanting to take on permanent positions in rural centres ensuring continuity for teachers, students and their parents.

In Western Australia it has become a requirement for families to travel to Perth or utilise telehealth to access these specialists, when previously the specialists have travelled to the regions. We believe this “footprint reduction” strategy deployed by the Health Department is affecting remote children whose families do not have the capacity to travel to seek diagnosis and treatment and children are slipping through the cracks without appropriate diagnosis and intervention to assist them with their learning. Even when students are referred to these services the wait time to see a specialist can be months or even a year which can have negative long-term effects academically especially when dealing with children under 5. This is also affecting rural and remote teachers and other students who are often dealing with these issues in the classroom without assistance. If the specialists were readily available in regional centres, it would be easier for families to travel to them and more likely that the same specialist would remain in the position giving children continuity of treatment.

M65 (A36) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that a permanent Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item number for telehealth consultations is assigned to telehealth Allied Health Services, specialists and consultations, including but not limited to Speech Pathology, Paediatricians and Psychologists, where they aren’t already available, to support the specific educational needs and learning difficulties of geographically isolated children.”

Moved: Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

Seconded: Matthew McCorkle Bourke (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Many allied health services are unavailable to rural and remote families.

Barriers are:

- that people have to travel extremely long distances.
- People have to join lengthy waiting lists to access practitioners located in their closest regional or metropolitan areas.
- There is little or no access to Allied Health Services, particularly for children with special needs and developmental delays (often on more than one domain).
- financial hardship caused by travel and accommodation costs while accessing treatment and not able to access IPTAAS. For example, a community may have a visiting specialist but they already have full books and waiting lists of over 18 months is not unusual but because there is a service available, families are not eligible.
- low socio-economic families living in rural and remote areas do not have the means to travel for treatment.
- rural and remote people are often unable to find their way around or unfamiliar with metropolitan areas in order to access treatment.
- most people needing NDIS plans are unable to navigate the system and without access to services they are unable to utilise their plans.
- we are aware of many families rejecting NDIS plans due to lack of access to services.

Utilisation of telehealth services can be of great benefit to families in geographically isolated locations who would otherwise have to travel considerable distances or encounter lengthy delays to access face to face consultations with relevant health professionals.

Students with developmental difficulties require frequent and timely consultations and these can be enabled via telehealth services for many families otherwise unable to access allied health professionals due to living in rural and remote areas.

Some specialist consultations, such as speech pathology, can be satisfactorily delivered using telehealth services where the technology is available. These services are already providing improved access to health services for some children in geographically isolated areas. The cost to families to access such services should also be equitable.

M66 (A37) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for improved access and utilisation of Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) funding, currently managed through the NDIS scheme for geographically isolated children.”

Moved: Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

Seconded: Matthew McCorkle Bourke (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Many remote and geographically isolated children are missing out on essential allied health supports due to the ability to access or utilise funding administered through NDIS for Early Childhood Early Intervention. In Bourke the NDIS Early Childhood Partner was McKillop, and they had around 7 staff supporting Western NSW. McKillop Family Services has now withdrawn and the workload has been transferred to NDIA staff. Remote areas also have a significant underutilisation of ECEI funding, as when children’s needs are identified, there are often no allied health services available to support them. Evidence shows that accessing Early Intervention supports improved educational outcomes.

M67 (A38) Alice Springs Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) urges the Federal Minister for Health and other relevant ministers and agencies to ensure that federally funded health clinics and health physicians across Australia are easily accessible to all Australians, so all geographically isolated children can receive a diagnosis and ongoing treatment of medical issues that impede their ability to learn and thrive.”

Moved: Katy Hayes Alice Springs (NT)

Seconded: Danyelle Haigh Alice Springs (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

We appreciate that there is ongoing work in progress for this motion. We thank ICPA Federal Council for your efforts thus far and wish to advise that the issue is still relevant and ongoing. Northern Territory ICPA members and families are unable to access public service providers without frequently being turned away from their local public, albeit remote, health clinics because they ‘do not meet the criteria’ (to access the public health clinic). Remote families have no other ‘local’ health clinic alternative, but if they ‘don’t meet the criteria’ and are refused treatment, they necessarily must travel vast distances including interstate to access treatment for what could have otherwise been dealt with closer to where they live, at their closest remote health clinic, serviced by rostered doctors, specialists and allied health providers. Some families are facing months, even years to try and access services in remote Australia being put on a waiting list that never actually runs in order either. It is not acceptable that publicly funded health facilities discriminate on race, demographic, or on any other basis, let alone in a situation where there are no other local alternatives for rural and remote families to ‘conveniently’ access.

Case Study 1:

Mum of seven year old child that has finally been diagnosed with ADHD through their SOA in the public system after years of waiting for said child to be assessed has now been told that they have been placed on a 12-18 month wait list to be seen by paediatrician doctors and allied health providers in the public system but if they were to pay or travel interstate they may be seen within a year. Said child has just turned 9 and still hasn't been seen by a paediatric doctor nor an OT or allied health provider. This child is still struggling on a daily basis to complete basic school activities, basic daily

tasks, form friendships and socially interact on a 9 year old level. This child is now mentally suffering and receiving private counselling and psychology with the parent out of pocket hundreds of dollars a month. A paediatric doctor and Occupational Therapist visit this family's local clinic only an hour away on a monthly to 6 weekly basis and this family has been told that because they do not fit the criteria they cannot be seen by these specialists!

Case Study 2:

Mum of four-year-old enrolled through SOA with a stutter and some speech problems, went to local remote clinic wanting to book an appointment with a speech therapist that travels to the local clinic on occasion, during the year. Mum was told, "I'm sorry, you do not fit the criteria, you will have to make an appointment in Darwin". Mum gets hold of the same speech therapist that travels to the local clinic, still told "No, I can't see you in XXXX (971km from Darwin), but I can see you in Darwin anytime". The speech therapist tells Mum that the first thing she must do is get a hearing test for her child, "Most local clinics are able to do a simple hearing test". Back to XXXX clinic and told yet again, sorry, you don't fit the criteria. Mum has had to travel 971km to Darwin for hearing tests and an initial consultation with a therapist; the rest of the appointments were done over Zoom. Mum reports "Zoom is ok, but certainly made it harder with the delay to be able to fully show the mouth positioning and sounds. It would be helpful to see the therapist at our local clinic once in a while, to make sure we are doing the right thing."

Presentation

Farewell to Kylie Toynton, Federal Councillor

Queensland ICPA President's Report

Wendy Henning

Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Report

Julia Broad

Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions – Early Learning

M68 (A21) CONJOINED MOTION presented by: Western Australia State Council, Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA), Katherine Branch (NT), Wentworth Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Federal Government for geographically isolated pre-compulsory school students enrolled in a registered distance education program to receive the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance where they meet other eligibility criteria."

Moved: Nerida Healy Wentworth (NSW)

Seconded: Katie Hall Goldfields Eyre (WA)

CARRIED

Explanation Western Australia State Council:

The AIC Distance Education (DE) Allowance is designed to assist families to set up and maintain the schoolroom. Currently, part-time distance education students are ineligible, therefore families enrolled in pre-compulsory programs must bear the costs. Most early learning programs require significantly more learning materials than that of older students studying at primary levels, with families having to provide learning resources for these students. If families received this Allowance, it would assist with the cost of suitable learning resources.

The majority of children who are enrolled in a pre-compulsory program are found to have better educational outcomes in later years, by forming these important foundations early on. Full-time or part-time, every child needs a schoolroom.

It is disappointing that the Federal Government continues to overlook this important Allowance each year.

Explanation Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA):

Under the current guidelines, part time distance education students are ineligible for the Distance Education (DE) component of the AIC Allowance, which means families enrolled in the 4-year-old programme must bear the costs of maintaining and setting up the classroom in that first year of schooling. This first year is often extremely costly for families.

The AIC DE Allowance is designed to assist families to set up and maintain the schoolroom. The schoolroom must be set up and maintained the day the child begins their education. Full-time or part time, the child needs a schoolroom.

Explanation Katherine Branch (NT):

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program. From the website www.education.gov.au/universal-access-early-childhood-education “The Australian Government is providing funding certainty for preschool, having committed \$453.1 million in the 2019-20 Budget to extend the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education until the end of 2020 ... This funding ensures that every child will continue to have access to a quality preschool program for 600 hours (15 hours a week) in the year before school. Universal Access [has] a focus on participation by Indigenous children, vulnerable and disadvantaged children in a range of settings in order to meet the needs of working families, and will be accessible to all Australian children, regardless of their location.”

If that was actually what was happening in rural and remote areas, this motion would be unnecessary! Setting up the classroom for distance education delivery for Pre-schoolers costs the same, if not more, as for the first year of compulsory schooling. The number of children accessing this pre-compulsory year by distance education is not huge. For example: Katherine School of the Air (KSA) has had a structured Pre-School Program in place for over 20 years and currently (Sem 1 2022) has 16 enrolments. On average KSA enrolments have been around 20-25 each year. The NT Government already recognises this cohort of students by making available half of the “NT Correspondence Site Allowance – Preschool” to assist all four-year-old children that are enrolled in pre-school with the Alice Springs and Katherine Schools of the Air.

Extending the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) distance education allowance to include these students will ensure greater and more equitable participation in Early Childhood Education by rural and remote students. Distance education students could benefit enormously from a minute portion of the billions of dollars allocated to early childhood education and care, including the funding intended to ensure the system is more accessible, affordable and fairer for families.

Explanation Wentworth Branch (NSW):

We congratulate many ministers both at the federal and state level for continuing to increase access to preschool, reduce costs and introduce additional access to this vital early education. Unfortunately, in remote areas this access will not be as accessible as it is for regional and city-based children.

In remote areas preschool comes at a huge cost to the family with either increased travel or the need for a dedicated supervisor. It is unrealistic to think that remote families can facilitate this increased preschool with no assistance.

Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions – Childcare**M69 (A22) Katherine Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education amend the In-Home Care rules for families in remote areas to allow:

1. An educator to care for children from more than one family at the same time.
2. An educator to care for their own child whilst caring for children from other family(ies) under In Home Care.”

Moved: Sally Sullivan Katherine (NT)

Seconded: Connie Wood Katherine (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

The reason for this is that there are often multiple families employed by and living in the same location in remote areas (for example pastoral stations, tourism and conservation operations). Due to the remote location all staff and the educator live at the same location. Allowing an educator to care for children from more than one family in these circumstances solves the practical problem of limited accommodation - accommodating more than one educator is likely to be difficult.

It also provides the opportunity for a greater range of people to be employed in these areas (including single parents) who would otherwise be unable to take these jobs as they wouldn't have access to childcare. By potentially increasing the number of children living at a location, all children will benefit from the social interaction.

Allowing an educator to care for their own children would also increase the range of people available as In Home Carers in remote areas. It is extremely difficult to find appropriately skilled people willing to live in remote areas. Allowing someone with their own child to be care for other children at the same remote location would be of great benefit.

Example 1: A single mother applies for a station hand position. She is highly qualified and prior to becoming a mother had extensive experience working on remote cattle stations. The owner of the station she has applied to also has a small child and already employs an educator through IHC. There is suitable accommodation for the mother and child but not enough for another educator. By allowing that educator to also care for the station hand's child, the station hand gets a job for which she is qualified for (it is also difficult to find good station hands so expanding the pool of people who could take these jobs is important) and both children have access to good quality childcare and a playmate.

Example 2: a guy applies for a station hand position on a remote cattle station. He and his partner have a toddler. There are no childcare facilities within 200km. The managers of the station also have a toddler. By allowing the partner to become the In-Home Carer (dependent on obtaining the relevant qualifications etc) the manager's child has access to high quality care, the manager(s) can concentrate on their jobs, the station hand is not separated from his partner and his partner has a fulfilling job.

The rules around Family Day Care provide a starting point for a structure to determine the appropriate number/age of children and how the CCS would work in this situation. Further consultation with families living in remote areas with young children would be required to refine these structures to ensure they are practical and suitable for their situation.

M70 (A23) Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government and the Minister for Education to change the In Home Care (IHC) requirements for educators so that the enrolment in an education degree also makes them eligible for IHC positions in geographically isolated areas.”

Moved: Ashley Purcell Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld (QLD)

Seconded: Page Vidler Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld (QLD)

CARRIED**Explanation:**

Families in geographical isolated areas are finding it difficult to find educators who are eligible to be enrolled in IHC. Educators need to be only enrolled in at least a Certificate III in Early Child Care, however a potential educator who is in 2nd year of Bachelor of Primary Education is not eligible to be enrolled with IHC until they have completed their degree and become a registered teacher.

The educator is employed for before and after school care of primary aged children so why do they then have to have an Early Childcare certificate. If the educator was employed in a town with before and after school care of primary aged children, they would not need this certificate.

M71 (A24) Wentworth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the relevant departments for geographically isolated families to be able to access the In Home Care program to provide supervision in the home classroom when the student is studying via an approved Distance Education School.”

Moved: Nerida Healy Wentworth (NSW)

Seconded: Bree Wakefield Wentworth (NSW)

CARRIED**Explanation:**

The government encourages parent participation in the workforce right across Australia, unless you have a primary school aged child studying via government approved distance education school. The expectation on those parents is that they will give up their work and running their business to tutor their children for the entirety of the primary school years. You cannot enrol your child in these schools without agreeing to provide constant supervision.

Many people across Australia should now appreciate that supervising your children to complete their schoolwork whilst doing your own job is almost impossible, yet that is what we expect of remote families every day.

Families should have access to In Home Care to ensure children are appropriately supervised during working hours and ensure productivity across remote Australia remains.

M72 (S3) Queensland State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates that In Home Care (IHC) Australia and other relevant stakeholders establish a dedicated or stand-alone rural and remote In Home Care branch that works with families who are geographically isolated.”

Moved: Kasie Scott Queensland State Council

Seconded: Kate Bradshaw Queensland State Council

CARRIED**Explanation:**

The In Home Care scheme is currently providing funding for a large number of families whose circumstances prevent them from accessing a standard child care centre. This funding enables families to employ a suitable educator to deliver childcare in their home regardless of where they live. The funding is individually tailored to meet the needs and circumstances of each family.

Throughout Queensland there is a number of IHC support agencies that families are enrolled with to help with the administration of having an IHC educator. It would be highly beneficial for all rural and remote families who use the IHC scheme to work with one agency that solely supports and fully understands rural and remote families and their needs living in geographically isolated areas.

M73 (A25) Flinders Ranges Branch (SA)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Education and the Minister for Early Childhood Education seek an inclusion to the Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011 SI 653) - Regulation 124 (NSW Legislation) to enable two approved family day care educators to care for children in an approved family day care venue in disadvantaged rural and remote areas of Australia where there is an absence, or limited supply, of Centre Based Day Care or Family Day Care services.”

Moved: Kirsty Williams South Australia State Council on behalf of Flinders Ranges (SA)

Seconded: Lisa Slade Flinders Ranges (SA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Our community in rural South Australia, like many rural towns across Australia, struggle with the lack of childcare. We are too small to attract a private provider to offer centre based long day care, our demand profile makes it unviable. The State Government have a Rural Care program where a childcare service is integrated within government preschools in rural communities where there are limited childcare options, to provide families with access to long day care for children from birth to 12 years. We have been advised by the Department for Education that there will be no further Rural Care places offered above the 17 that currently exist.

We are simply seeking a small inclusion into the current legislation to enable more than one approved family day care educator to care for children in our approved family day care ‘in-venue’ location. This provides a cost-effective solution to the government to cover childcare demand in small disadvantaged rural communities where no appropriate childcare exists. It strikes us as remarkably unfair that rural communities must continually do all the leg work (volunteering/financially) to provide solutions to issues such as childcare, because it is easier to let us fall through the cracks than support us. Childcare is not going to be a profitable venture in small rural and remote communities that attracts providers, but that does not mean we do not deserve to be supported in providing it.

This small change means that we will be able to meet our current childcare demand, at little to no cost to either state or federal government. It importantly provides the community with an approved and regulated care model, it enables eligible families to claim the childcare subsidy and has the added benefit in that approved family day care educators will have the support of each other in what is widely known as an isolating environment for family day care providers to work in.

Current legislation:

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS - REG 124

[Education and Care Services National Regulations \(2011 SI 653\) - NSW Legislation](#)

Number of children who can be educated and cared for--family day care educator

124 Number of children who can be educated and cared for--family day care educator

(1) A family day care educator must not educate and care for more than 7 children at a family day care residence or approved family day care venue at any one time.

(2) In determining the number of children who can be educated and cared for by a family day care educator for the purposes of sub regulation (1)--

(a) no more than 4 can be preschool age or under; and

(b) if the children are being educated and cared for at a residence, the educator's own children and any other children at the residence are to be taken into account if--

- (i) those children are under 13 years of age; and
- (ii) there is no other adult present and caring for the children.

(3) No more than 7 children can be educated and cared for as part of a family day care service at a family day care residence or an approved family day care venue at any one time

Requested addition to the above current legislation:

In disadvantaged rural and remote areas of Australia where there is an absence, or limited supply, of Centre Based Day Care or Family Day Care services two approved family day care educators may care for children in a single approved family day care venue with an exception to (1), (2) and (3) as follows:

(1) Two family day care educators must not educate and care for more than 14 children at an approved family day care venue at any one time.

(2) In determining the number of children who can be educated and cared for by a family day care educator for the purposes of sub regulation (1)--

- (a) no more than 8 can be preschool age or under; and
- (b) if the children are being educated and cared for at a residence, the educator's own children and any other children at the residence are to be taken into account if--
 - (i) those children are under 13 years of age; and
 - (ii) there is no other adult present and caring for the children.

(3) No more than 14 children can be educated and cared for as part of a family day care service at an approved family day care venue at any one time.

M74 (A26) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for sufficient funding from streams such as the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) Sustainability stream (or any other funding streams that may be similar), be made available for services in remote and very remote locations to meet their operational costs which are unable to be met through the Childcare Subsidy (CCS)/Parent Fee model.”

Moved: Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

Seconded: Matthew McCorkle Bourke (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Services providing Childcare Subsidy Model childcare are currently capped at the maximum amount of CCCF Sustainability funding they are able to apply for (\$200,000 pa) despite the operational gap they are able to demonstrate, which is often significantly larger. The same cap applies to services in regional areas as in remote and very remote locations, and the only longer-term funding is in the CCCF-Restricted pool, which services may not be eligible for. Remote and very remote services have to meet significantly higher staffing and operational costs – such as providing housing for teachers and meeting the pay parity gap for teachers to attract and retain adequately qualified teachers. Early Childhood Services in remote and very remote locations should be able to provide a service with teachers and staff at the same level as their city cousins - our children are worth no less, and often have significantly more vulnerabilities according to the AECD (Australian Early Childhood Development) Census Data.

Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions – Other

M75 (A27) Louth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant Federal Ministers amend the lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and high school teachers to assist with access to early childhood education in rural and remote communities.”

Moved: Tanya Mitchell New South Wales State Council on behalf of Louth (NSW)
Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

It is necessary that salary payments of early childhood teachers can be afforded the same salary package as their four-year trained peers who are working in primary and high schools.

Currently, the pay gap is so significant it is impossible to recruit and retain teachers in early childhood centres and new recruits often use early childhood jobs as a steppingstone into the primary school sector.

Particularly in the remote context where the early childhood packages are without comparable incentives such as holiday pay, provision for housing, access to professional support and travel to attend professional development.

Some centres are unable to offer early childhood packages which are equal to those in state primary and high schools.

M76 (A28) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant Federal Ministers for funding to be sought to address Early Childhood Teacher pay parity to assist with access to early childhood education in rural and remote communities.”

Moved: Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)
Seconded: Matthew McCorkle Bourke (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers is a significant issue. An Early Childhood Teacher completes a 4 year degree course. In a remote early childhood service, an Early Childhood Teacher can expect a salary of around \$85,000. If they maintain NSEA proficient accreditation and elect to work in the Public School System, at a Connected Beginnings School, such as Bourke, in a rural and remote location, the additional benefits they would get compared to working as an Early Childhood Teacher would tally to \$114,500 p.a and includes:

- Additional 8 weeks of annual leave valued at \$17,500p.a.
- Significantly shorter contact hours per week
- Approx \$30,000 additional salary
- Professional mentoring by other Teachers
- Structured Professional development programs (\$10,000 pa)
- Access to Teacher Housing/Rural Teacher Incentive \$25,000
- Retention bonus \$5,000
- Recruitment bonus \$20,000
- Climatic, Social and Geographic allowance \$3,000
- In addition to the above, there is also the impact on superannuation to be considered \$4,000.

Early Childhood services are significantly limited in their budgets. It is important to find long term solutions to address pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers in rural and remote locations.

M77 (A29) Meekatharra Air Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant minister instigate changes to the Working Holiday visa (subclass 417), of the Working Holiday Maker Program (WHM), to include as eligible employment, the positions of governess/nanny/au pair for Working Holiday visa holders intending to complete the

required 88 days of work within the specified industry of 'Plant and Animal Cultivation in Regional Australia'."

Moved: Olivia Ford Meekatharra Air (WA)
Seconded: Tracie Blair Meekatharra Air (WA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

There is a constant skills shortage when it comes to experienced workers in agriculture. The broadening of eligible work positions within the visa regulations, may not mean that qualifying workers on visas would directly engage in the cultivation of plant and animals in regional Australia. The direct impact however, would be that already competent agricultural workers could return to the workforce, which would still achieve the desired aim of an increase in skilled workers actively engaged in agriculture.

As it currently stands, the WHM program declares the position of a nanny on a farm, to be an ineligible employment option when seeking to increase the time on Working Holiday visas. By revising the Working Holiday visa regulations, it would allow skilled and experienced members of a farm workforce, undertaking duties at home, such as childcare and the home tutoring of distance education children, to return to every day agricultural work. This would be due to these childcare/education positions on rural properties being effectively filled by visa holders.

Due to the restrictive job criteria of the WHM program, many capable applicants are not applying for childcare or education related positions in rural areas when needing employment counting towards extensions to their visas.

It is expected that the inclusion of these suggested new employment positions would result in the 88 workdays undertaken as a governess/nanny or au pair, also counting towards qualifying workdays for second or third year visa extension applications.

M78 (A30) Western Australia State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate that the Federal Government implements a nationally recognised and administered Working with Children Card (WWCC)."

Moved: Jane Cunningham Western Australia State Council
Seconded: Louise Ford Western Australia State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

WA State Council fully supports the implementation of a nationally administered police clearance, specifically for children.

Employees who move across state borders are required to reapply for a WWCC when applying for employment in a new state. This process can result in lengthy delays when employing staff of up to eight weeks, causing disruptions to students and families. Currently, a person who wishes to obtain a WWCC for work purposes is checked nationally, which is then administered at a state level.

M79 (A31) Far North Queensland Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to implement a national Blue Card system, or relevant Working with Children Check in Australia."

Robyn O'Brien, Far North Queensland Branch (QLD) requested conference's permission for A31 (M79) to be deemed covered by A30 (M78).

DEEMED COVERED by M78 (A30)

Explanation:

In Australia, the blue card system, or relevant working with children check, regulates activities that are essential to children's lives including education, childcare, healthcare, sporting, and cultural activities. There are eight Blue Cards, or Working with Children Checks (WWCC) in Australia, a separate one for each state and territory, and each working independently of each other.

Having a state-by-state/territory Blue Card, or WWCC, is affecting tutors, teachers, health professionals, police, volunteers, and volunteer organisations, as they have to navigate the relevant state and territory legislations and research what is involved in the screening and application processes to work or volunteer with children. This is and can be a barrier to workers and volunteers coming into rural and remote areas to work and volunteer with children and makes it difficult for them to move from one state or territory to another.

For example, the BushED tutoring program, places educational volunteers from around the nation with rural and remote families to provide relief and educational support. This program is called upon particularly by geographically families to provide educational tutoring assistance to students enrolled in distance education. However, the state-by-state/territory Blue Card system, or relevant WWCC, can be a hindrance to volunteers from interstate as they must have the relevant Blue Card, or Working with Children Card, for the state or territory in which they wish to volunteer. Further, the application process can be time consuming, particularly if tutors (and their partners) wish to volunteer in multiple states or Territories.

The need for a national approach to the Blue Card or WWCC has been advocated for many years. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2015 recommended a nationally consistent approach to the WWCC which if implemented would not only protect children, but also address the problem of a Blue Card or WWCC issued in one jurisdiction not being recognised or transportable to another.

Presentation

Farewell to Sue Shotton, Federal Webmaster

Curriculum Portfolio Presentation

Alana Moller

Presentation

'Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)'

Sharon Foster Executive Director, Curriculum

Russell Dyer Executive Director, Assessment and Reporting

Curriculum Portfolio Motions**M80 (S2) Charters Towers Branch (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education to review NAPLAN reporting timeframes, enabling schools to access students' results in a timely manner, preferably during Term 2 in the year of examination, to better support the specific learning needs of rural and remote students."

Moved: Maxine Sharpe Charters Towers (QLD)

Seconded: Sonia Spurdle Charters Towers (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

In 2023, the dates of NAPLAN testing were moved earlier in the school year, to Term 1. One of the expectations of this change in date is that results would be provided to schools in a timely manner, so that they may review the results, identify the needs of the cohort and individual students, and

provide necessary support as available. In 2023, the NAPLAN results will not be made available until Term 3 which limits schools' capacity to review, act upon and support students in a timely manner. It is well documented that rural and remote students' have unique educational needs and that there is a widening gap between metropolitan and rural and remote students in relation to results of NAPLAN testing.

More information can be found in the following articles:

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/news/releases/2022/november/naplan-not-remotely-working>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/dec/15/naplan-shows-no-obvious-falls-in-literacy-and-numeracy-during-covid-but-city-and-country-gap-widens>

It is difficult to effect change and improve student outcomes in the calendar year if there is a lengthy delay between assessment and access to results. If teachers and school administrators had access to NAPLAN results in Term 2, there is a higher likelihood that supports could be made available to address areas of learning need, particularly for rural and remote children who are already educationally disadvantaged.

ICPA Western Australia President's Report

Jane Cunningham

Miscellaneous Motions continued

M81 (A60) Northern Territory State Council

"That at future Federal ICPA Conferences that ICPA branch conference delegates' and observers' partners be offered conference observer admission at a very low rate to encourage participation and greater gender diversity of our organisation."

Moved: Kiya Gill Northern Territory State Council

Seconded: Moira Lanzarin Northern Territory State Council

LOST

Explanation:

At the present time, gender diversity within ICPA at all levels is heavily skewed to females, to mothers. Whilst there are many practical reasons for this, we need to be mindful that our actions need to actively encourage both parents - mothers AND FATHERS - and ensure that both are made feel welcome to participate in ICPA. And that diversity on Councils and Committees make for more robust and strong decision making.

The historic practice of organising fun and highly subsidised (for e.g. Darwin tours capped at fee of \$20 but true cost much greater) PARTNER TOURS during conference time may actually attract partners, Dad's, to participate in those as opposed to going to conference - where they can hear, see, understand, contribute (and be impressed by) the activities of their partners. Pre and post tours could be arranged or participation as observer at conference at the same low rate as the Partner Tours offered.

We acknowledge that some states and branches have a much greater gender mix than others and applaud them on that. This motion is targeted at creating the conversation to be mindful of gender inclusiveness and to be careful that our actions aren't contributing to some choosing not to actively participate in ICPA.

M82 (S4) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) introduce a by-law allowing financial ordinary members to be affiliated with other branches from their State."

Margaret Brock, Mt Isa Branch of the Air requested conference's permission to withdraw S4 (M82)

Conference permission granted.**WITHDRAWN****Explanation:**

Ordinary members who wish to be closely associated or connected to another branch should be encouraged to do so. For example, a financial member of the Julia Creek ICPA branch would only have to pay our Mt Isa BOTA a small fee, endorsed by our branch at our AGM, to be an affiliate member of our branch, not purchase two full memberships which is currently the only available legitimate option. We are noticing that some branch events require compulsory branch membership of ICPA to participate such as sports camps, and that this is leading to a prevalence of members holding two ICPA memberships. Our branch has members who have paid full membership (that is branch, State and Federal fees) twice over, so QLD State has received \$60 and Federal \$44 from the same member. State-wide there are some instances where one spouse is a member of one branch and the other spouse a different branch. There are also travelling families who have membership with their local branch and additional membership with another branch when they are contracting in that area. We appreciate that multiple branch memberships cause issues for the current online membership system and significant changes would have to be made to the constitution and database to accept affiliate memberships as an additional category. Therefore instead, we are requesting that affiliates be defined within an ICPA by-law and give branches the discretion whether to accept affiliates and charge a fee. Affiliates may engage with branch activities and motions however cannot be on their affiliate branch/es Executive nor be a branch delegate for affiliate branches. Every committee in Australia is struggling to get volunteers so why don't we let financial members wanting to help and join in with other branches be supported to do so.

M83 (A61) Northern Territory State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) accepts our collective gratitude for the work you put into not only advocating for members, but also for the depth and quality of information you develop, make available and share with stakeholders, State Councils and members in the course of your advocacy on a national level. We thank you for representing ICPA nationally in a most professional and esteemed way."

Moved: Kiya Gill Northern Territory State Council

Seconded: Moira Lanzarin Northern Territory State Council

CARRIED with Acclamation**Explanation:**

ICPA Australia has always done an incredible job advocating for members, but in this motion, we'd like to acknowledge Federal Councils consistently high standards for the benefit of our members.

Floor Motions**M84 (F1) Northern Territory State Council**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to establish funding to deliver mobile remote playgroups to geographically isolated children, aged 0-5 years who are currently without access to any such service because of where they live."

Moved: Moira Lanzarin Northern Territory State Council

Seconded: Kiya Gill Northern Territory State Council

CARRIED**M85 (F2) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

"That ICPA (Aust) request the relevant Federal Ministers expand the criteria of the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) to better suit the needs of rural and remote students."

Moved: Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)
Seconded: Matthew McCorkle Bourke (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

At present the TAP is only eligible to school leavers and should include those taking a gap year or deferring traineeships and include Australian Apprenticeships.

Presentation

Thank You to the Convening Committee

Carried with Acclamation

Vote of Thanks to the Chair

Moved by Wendy Hick

Carried with Acclamation

Closing of Conference

Alana Moller

Conference Closed 4.49pm

CONFERENCE REPORTS

FEDERAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Alana Moller

Distinguished guests, Federal Life Members, fellow ICPA members and friends it is with great pleasure and pride that I have the opportunity to present the Federal President's report, at the beginning of the conference which will mark my last year in the role. Thank you to all of you here who have come from near and far, through dust or mud, on dirt or bitumen, by car or plane, or all of the above and more, to join me and Federal Council as we hold our 52nd Federal Conference.

As I considered which quote to use for my final President's Report, I found myself drawn to this from the novel Lord of the Rings "I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

And as I reflect on the events of the past four years, I feel this. I took on the role of Federal President in 2019, as a very green and rather unskilled individual, high on passion but perhaps low on the practicalities of the role and I could never have imagined what was to come. The past four years have been marked by unprecedented change and adjustment and I hope that what I have done with the time that has been given to me leaves ICPA Australia in a positive position. But enough about me as I am here to update you all on the immense efforts of our extraordinary Federal Council this past year.

In the past twelve months, Federal Council have met face to face on several occasions and attended events in person, an opportunity after 3 years hindered by COVID restrictions to come together, reacquaint, collaborate and mingle. This has included two face to face Council meetings, two delegations to Canberra, Federal Councillor attendance at all State Conferences as well as a number of other roundtables, conferences and events.

Following last year's Conference in Perth, the 2022-23 Federal Council Year set off in a "Carpe Diem" frame of mind, we seized the day, with all motion correspondence despatched by the end of September, meetings held, events attended and there were actions aplenty, as we keenly continued the momentum of conference and raised and advocated for the topics that matter most to members at every opportunity.

In October and May, we embarked on delegations at Parliament House covering 33 and 28 meetings respectively, including with the Hon Jason Clare MP Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm, Assistant Minister for Education and Hon Anne Aly, Minister for Early Childhood Education, amongst other new and familiar faces. The opportunity to hold in person delegations again definitely enlivened us. We have also continued to connect regularly with the Federal Department of Education, the Department of Social Services and Services Australia. This engagement has extended to submission opportunities to Government. Late last year, we lodged our 2023-24 Pre-Budget Submission in which we once again focussed on 6 longstanding topics listed on the screen,

1. An increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance and alignment to the CPI Sub Education Index.
2. The extension of the AIC Distance Education allowance to 3–4-year-old geographically isolated children accessing an approved distance education early learning program.
3. The implementation of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) for geographically isolated distance education families.
4. Assured funding for rural and remote Mobile Early Learning Services.
5. An increase to the Commonwealth Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA) and alignment to the CPI.
6. The establishment of a Rural Hardship Education Fund (RHEF)

as our key recommendations, all of which have been costed to show that a small investment can make a big difference and have been raised with other advocacy across all portfolios at every opportunity.

While throughout Conference you will hear from all of our portfolio leaders and you will find full portfolio reports in your conference booklet, I would like to share some insight into other portfolio activities.

Communications continues to be an eventful, yet often gratifying portfolio particularly with a number of recent exciting and positive developments. However, the Portfolio remains focussed on guaranteeing adequate communications services are maintained and continue to be enhanced. We particularly appreciate our opportunity to work closely with the Regional Tech Hub, Telstra, nbn and the RRRCC to raise our members voices. I would be remiss not to mention that it is the current and past Communications Portfolio leader, as well as Immediate Past President, Wendy Hick who I think we need to be forever indebted to for the incredible differences that have occurred and continue to be made in rural and remote communications and for the continued strong voice of ICPA in the communications arena.

NAPLAN testing has been a hot topic in the Curriculum portfolio with changes over the past few years, specifically the move to fully online testing and a change of dates for the testing window, commencing this year and we continue to ensure rural and remote specific topics are highlighted.

Of interest in the Early Childhood Education and Care portfolio is that the Early Childhood Section of the Federal Department of Education is conducting a comprehensive review of early childhood programs and systems and ICPA (Aust) is particularly eager to see positive change within the In Home Care program.

In the school space, it has been a pleasing to be a part of the National School Reform Agreement consultation, as well as for myself participating in the Ministerial Reference Group.

In the area of Specific Education Needs we have been pleased to welcome new telehealth and rural and remote health worker incentives and will continue to advocate for expansion of these initiatives to further improve services for rural and remote students.

Across Tertiary and Training we were especially pleased to see an increase to youth allowance and rent assistance in the recent Federal Budget. We have also taken the opportunity to contribute to several Tertiary and Vocational Education and Training submissions in recent months, enabling us to raise many of the issues facing rural and remote tertiary and training students.

Over and above our ongoing advocacy, this past year, Federal Council has also embarked on governance training and strategic planning to not only upskill Councillors but to ensure that we continue to represent members appropriately. Our forebears left our organisation in good hands with processes put in place and it is to the current Federal Council's advantage that we can build on what is already a solid foundation to ensure the longevity of ICPA and ensure that the individuals who make ICPA what it is are supported and valued.

Also, following on from the motion carried at conference last year "that ICPA (Aust) allocates funds each year to an external professional consultancy to advise and mentor on how to best gain traction on some longstanding lobbies", Federal Council has engaged media and communications specialist C7even to enhance our advocacy on some of our long term topics. We are excited at this opportunity and how it may help us to clock some extra wins in the future. We may however need YOUR help – we cannot get our message out unless we have data and stories and we may be reaching out to members in the coming months to ask for your assistance. I thank those who have already contributed to our Member Engagement Survey sent out earlier this year.

In early 2023, Kim Hughes and I attended a joint councils meeting in Melbourne, to discuss combined advocacy, governance and administrative activities with all state presidents and secretaries. The opportunity to collaborate, share and assist each other where possible is very much appreciated and I assure members that the top priority of all Councils is to our members and all Councils efforts to support their members is admirable.

I wish to also mention the truly valuable and ongoing support ICPA Australia receives from stakeholders and other organisations, including but not limited to the Australian Boarding Schools Association, Telstra, nbn, ACARA, Boarding Expos Australia and Thrive By Five. All engagement and collaboration opportunities are welcomed. Further, may I acknowledge the generosity and financial assistance we receive from individuals, business and other organisations, including branches and state councils, across the country, not only for our Federal Conference but also throughout the year. I particularly wish to once again highlight the generosity of the McDonald family and the Four Seasons Company, with ICPA continuing to be a beneficiary of a percentage of the sales from ZM nutrition blocks for cattle, released in honour of beef industry leader, the late Zanda McDonald. Federal Council feels a true sense of pride and honour to be a part of this initiative and it is a pleasure to be able to utilise this generous financial support to assist 5 branches to attend our Federal Conference in 2021, two branches last year and ten branches to be here this year.

The Federal Council here this week looks slightly different from the 2022 Conference. Regrettably farewellled Suzanne Wilson from Federal Council in light of her commitments to convening this Conference. Suzanne's incredible efforts in her time on Federal Council both as Secretary and then as Publicity Officer made her an invaluable asset to ICPA and we should all be tremendously grateful she put her hand up back in 2017. I am delighted that Ali Allison, stepped into the role of Publicity Officer role with passion and enthusiasm! We also welcomed to Federal Council over the year, Miffy Waugh from Queensland and Kylie Toynton hailing from New South Wales. This year has also been one of incredible efforts by those who we work alongside in off council positions – Judy Newton, Nikki Macqueen, Sue Shotton, Hannah Calcino and Tracey Dewell in particular, and we have achieved so much in such a short time across membership, the database, our website, and Pedals and I can only see positives ahead in all of these spaces.

Without outstanding individuals willing to come on board, we could not maintain the ongoing work of ICPA Australia. My gratitude to all, new and old, for your commitment and efforts.

This brings me to the here and now and what is ahead for Federal Council in the coming months. Following on from Conference, a new Federal Council team, under the leadership of a new President, will, I am sure, be once again committed to making sure every effort is made to address motions carried over the next two days. I look forward to remaining on the team as the Immediate Past President but must acknowledge those current Councillors and our support team who will not be continuing in their roles after this Conference. Kate Thompson, who has ridden the waves alongside me over the past four years as Assistant Secretary, is standing down from the role after completing four years. I highly commend Kate for the incredible heart and soul efforts in this role and ICPA is blessed that she is staying on board Federal Council. While Kylie Toynton's time on Federal Council has been short, it has been a privilege to have her on our team and we hope we have an opportunity to cross paths with her in the future. Laura Stalley, such an inspiring and dedicated, busy, but so very organised and considered teammate you have been. I am so glad that New South Wales will still be graced with your remarkable presence. Sue Shotton, what an incredible and lasting legacy you will leave for ICPA. Without your continued commitment and dedication to ICPA over more years than most of us in this room, I fear we may have found ourselves quite lagging in the everchanging challenging tech space! Of course, while you are stepping away now, I know we will still be calling on you regularly as we move toward a new tech process. And lastly, Wendy Hick. I am not sure there are any words that will sufficiently describe the gratitude that ICPA as a collective owe to you as you step down as Immediate Past President. To know that your steady, guiding hand, considered and comprehensive approach, extensive knowledge and experiences along with you as an individual, has

always been there for Federal Council has been such a relief. I know all of these things have often been taken for granted but I hope despite that, you realise just how important and respected you are to us all. I hope you get to go forth and conquer elsewhere now, but please always be up for a “what do you think” ICPA call or message!

In case I don't get another chance, I also pay tribute now to not only the entire 2022-23 Federal Council team, but to all of the amazing Federal Councillors and other ICPA volunteers I have worked with over the past four years. Please know how much I cherish and value you. It has been extraordinary to have the opportunity to laugh, cry, celebrate, commiserate, debate, work, ponder, discuss, reflect, plan (and-replan), adjust, process and so much more with you all along the way.

And members, a reminder that myself and Federal Council advocate on behalf of YOU across early childhood education, distance education, rural schools, boarding, specific needs education, tertiary and training as well as in the communications and curriculum space. We are everyday parents, farmers, graziers, business owners, home tutors, teachers, jacks & jills-of-all trades living and working in rural and remote Australia and we are honoured to be able to assist and represent you. While we cannot do everything, we will always do what we can to continue the legacy of ICPA to achieve equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for our geographically isolated children and ensure that being geographically isolated does not mean you are alone. On a personal note, I hope that what I have done in the time I have been graciously given as Federal President has been enough. And now let us look towards our 52nd ICPA Federal Conference and may this be your opportunity to express what you need Federal Council to advocate for on your behalf. May there be robust and passionate conversation, debate and collaboration along with a good dash of mingling and merriment along the way. I truly believe that Conferences are where the real magic of ICPA is on show, my love affair with all things ICPA began following my first Conference and I look forward to being inspired all over again in this room over the next two days.

FEDERAL TREASURER'S REPORT

Nikki Mahony

Since June 2022, there have been significant changes to Federal Council finances and some key positions. In July 2023, another significant changing of the guard will occur.

In summary, the audited report for 2023 reflects a significant increase in costs across the board (think cost of living crisis) and Federal Council being able to attend all planned delegations, face to face meetings and State conferences over the past twelve months. This at least has been a refreshing change. Imagine frank and open conversations with real people and experiencing the energy attending a conference brings!

MEMBERSHIP

At the conference last year, ICPA (Aust) bid farewell to Jane O'Brien as our membership officer. Jane recommended that the membership officer role be moved to an off-council position so that any incoming person could better manage the workload and concentrate on members. It turned out to be sage advice, encouraging Judy Newton to step onboard and bring to the role a wealth of experience and knowledge of how ICPA operates.

Federal Council would like to acknowledge and thank the huge membership team who have worked so hard over the last year processing memberships, assisting members and promoting ICPA.

Throughout the last year, a focus has been placed on reviewing the member renewal experience on our website, with upgrades currently being worked on. Several changes have been made to reduce

the workload, cloud accounting has been a game changer and encouraging members to update their own information online, has made a significant difference.

Judy has been a marvellous assistance to branches and members throughout the renewal process and has helped with issues around banking, change of branch executives and login strategies. She has been an important part of the feedback loop to the Federal Council and we are grateful for her contributions. If you need advice on membership matters, including changing to online banking, please contact Judy. She is happy to help and even considering running training sessions on managing memberships.

During the 2023 financial year, ICPA Australia had 2,283 financial members (compared with 2,503 last year, 2,546 in 2021, 2,561 in 2020), four Corporate Members and nine School Corporate Members. Concerned by a drop in membership numbers, a number of campaigns were organised this year, including the "We Missed You" campaign, where members who had not renewed in the last two years were encouraged to "Reconnect and Rejoin ICPA," helping bring many members back on track. While I am on the subject, remember to log into your portal to update your personal details such as emails and address if you move. Another hot tip - It is much easier to hit the "forgot password" than trawl through the memory banks to find it too.

Our true strength lies in our membership and the number of families we represent, so there is a real need for each of us to continue to promote ICPA to all those who benefit from our advocacy and those who want to support the work we do. Sponsoring or gifting a membership is a great way to introduce families and community members to ICPA. If you as a branch or individuals have other innovative ideas, we would love to hear from you.

SPONSORSHIP AND DONATIONS

The McDonald family and Four Seasons Company continue to generously support ICPA (Aust) through a sponsorship in honour of the late Zanda McDonald. Five percent of sales from the ZM Breeder and Weaner Block range enables ICPA (Aust) to provide some financial support to branches attending conference and provides us with a broader scope to promote ICPA's cause and maintain our presence on a federal level. In the 2022-23 financial year they have supported us to the tune of \$20,386, which has been greatly appreciated. ICPA (Aust) is immensely proud to be associated with the ZM Breeder & Weaner Block range by Four Seasons and the McDonald family and we are so very grateful for their support.

Donations were gratefully received from the following branches during the 2022-23 financial year; Alpha (Qld), Arcadia Valley (Qld), Belyando-Mt Coolon (Qld), Clermont (Qld), Katherine (NT), Louth Branch (NSW), Mitchell/Dunkeld-Tomoo (NSW), Mt Isa BOTA (Qld), Winton Branch (Qld).

Thank you all. We know how hard our members work to raise funds for their branch and our organisation. Every little bit helps ICPA give our families a voice and we truly appreciate the generosity from our grass roots.

Telstra and nbn Co are once again generously sponsoring the ICPA Federal Conference in 2023. We appreciate the support they offer ICPA not only financially but also through working collaboratively with Federal Council to improve communications. It has been exciting to see so much movement in this space in the past two years and we enjoy challenging and working with both groups. To note in financials, some of the sponsorship monies for 2023 were processed directly through the conference convening committee rather than through Federal Council.

PEDALS

ICPA (Aust) have been incredibly happy with the successful changeover to the new Pedals Editor and Publisher. We are delighted to have Hannah Calcino here at conference as Pedals editor eager to hear your stories and take your photo!

FINANCES

A significant profit in 2022-23 is directly attributable to audited reports and profit share funds being finalised for two conferences at once and bolstered by generous sponsorships and grassroots donations. Fifteen percent of these proceeds have been directed back to each host State Council.

Total profit from the 2021 conference – Longreach (50 th year or Celebration)	\$ 189,543
Total profit from the 2022 conference – Perth	\$ 43,137

While our income has been well bolstered, the high costs of travel and accommodation have really been quite a shock. We are also faced with full upfront payments, strict minimum spends in venues and onerous cancellation policies being implemented by many hotels and venues which will continue to hit our hip pocket.

The final payment for our two-year grant through the Federal Department of Education was processed just before the end of this current financial year. ICPA (Aust) submitted a grant application for continued funding in April and we were excited to learn that we have been successful in securing another contract which is in the process of being finalised.

Federal Council expects software and related IT expenses to remain high due to changes in how computers and programs now operate. We now maintain online subscriptions to Adobe, Microsoft operating systems, email domain platforms, Mailchimp email software, Zoom etc. Technology is moving at a far greater pace than us and much of the IT work we have attempted to keep in council is now beyond most of our capabilities. Federal Council has sought paid external IT support and this is still somewhat of a work in progress. So on that note, if anyone out there is interested in being the ICPA (Aust) dedicated IT support technician, I would love to hear from you.

Website expenses have come back a bit for this financial year and we have been able to build greater collaboration, coherence and communication between State Councils, Federal Council and branches into our database and website teams. Improving on this and streamlining renewal processes should see these costs decrease slightly and stabilise year to year.

ICPA (Aust) insured through Community Underwriting again in 2023 and extended the policy to include cyber security protection which is an unknown space but recommended for any organisation managing a database.

Tasmanian State Council funds continue to be held in trust on their behalf in a stand-alone account and Tasmanian membership fees are now paid to Tasmania Branch. Federal Council continues to administer the online component of Tasmanian memberships.

As indicated last year, with significant reserves now invested to ensure sustainability for ICPA in the medium term, Federal Council feels the time is right to utilise some funds to leverage our impact through strategic media engagement and more targeted campaigns. (A not-for-profit organisation can make a profit, but any profit made must be used for its purposes. It can keep profits as long as there is a genuine reason for this and it is to do with its purpose.)

The budget for 2023-24 anticipates a small loss as we start to eat into these reserves and works on the assumption that we might be successful in some of our grant applications.

Having held off for several years, to cover administration and publishing costs, a small increase in fees is required across all membership types. It is recommended that the federal component of ICPA membership increase from \$22 per annum to \$25 per annum and School Corporate and Corporate memberships increase from \$275 to \$300 per annum.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

This year, Federal Council have been examining what sustainability looks like for ICPA. It's not just about financial security, but member engagement, community relevance, team functionality and individual wellbeing.

ICPA (Aust) has identified that investment is required to firm up our foundations, protect our greatest assets (our volunteers) from burn out and set in place more streamlined processes and reviews to remain viable for the long haul.

How do we propose to do this from the inside out?

1. Adventure All Stars is an initiative of Charity TV Global and ICPA (Aust) bare on the lookout for an enthusiastic person (or people) up for adventure and keen to help raise funds and awareness for ICPA.

How it works;

ICPA (Aust) needs to register as an interested charity for the program and choose a specific use for all funds raised through the program/series.

Individuals register as "talent," choose their charity to support (ICPA!) and raise a minimum of \$10,000 to qualify for the "adventure of a lifetime". Individuals are fully supported by the Charity TV Global team and fundraising is over ten months, so you are aiming for \$1,000 per month.

The limited timeframe to advertise and secure talent in 2023, proved unworkable so now ICPA (Aust) is on the lookout for expressions of interest from individuals willing to participate when this opportunity next comes up in early 2024.

Please contact Nikki Mahony (fedtreasurer@icpafc.org.au) or start googling Charity TV Global (HINT www.charitytvglobal.com) now to sign up yourself. Just remember to nominate ICPA (Aust) as your chosen charity.

2. QANTAS community grant – flight contra, marketing and cash grant.

ICPA (Aust) also applied for a Qantas community grant in May in the form of small cash grant, flight contra and marketing support. There is a strong sense of kinship within ICPA for Qantas with aligned values of equity, diversity and strong connections to our roots in remote Australia.

If successful, we would relish the opportunity to work with Qantas to develop a crisp, clear message about the work that we do, the lives we can change and why it matters.

3. Strategic planning, governance training, formalised budgeting, feedback and review.

Both Federal and State Councils operate effectively as a board, complete with all the protocols and responsibilities of an incorporated organisation. This year, Federal Council undertook structured group governance training to ensure all board members had adequate training and support to meet good governance standards.

Federal Council has a formalised budget in place which will operate as a working document reviewed throughout the year as a measure of how we are tracking and where our pain points and opportunities lie.

We know that most council positions require dedication, learning on the fly and a significant amount of time. Some executive positions are currently equivalent to a full-time job. Even with a good bank balance, this is not a sustainable model for Council moving forward as it is neither healthy for current councillors nor much of an incentive for others to come on board.

As we have already been working on member engagement, media relations and targeted advocacy strategies with public relations company C7even, in May ICPA (Aust) expanded our contract with C7even to commence a strategic planning process, board evaluation and feedback.

We are also currently working through a handful of other initiatives to streamline planning and running of Federal Conference and more structured IT and web support.

I hope to report on how successfully this all pans out next year!

IN CLOSING

When I first joined Federal Council in 2020, all I had was the knowledge that we as a family had benefited from the generations of advocacy work by ICPA and that I might have something to contribute. I happened to be at a stage where I wanted to stretch myself professionally and was impressed with how ICPA conducted meetings and conferences. I appreciated the apparent structure, strict adherence to policy and protocols and strong team camaraderie. In short ICPA felt like promising training ground and a vehicle to help me stare down my fear of small talk with strangers, large crowds and public speaking demons (not much to ask).

These were not my most glaring shortfalls either, I can tell you. I had a limited understanding of how ICPA was structured, why our branch motions submitted to State Conference had to be redirected to Federal, who the people on councils and in support roles were, who relevant politicians or governing bodies were and the role that each played in setting and delivering policy.

I did think I had a pretty good grasp of technology too, but boy was I wrong! I can tell you that I spent most of my first year feeling more like a lead weight than a useful contributor.

I know, look at me go! I barely recognise the person I used to be in 2020 (not just because of the wrinkles and silver sparkles in my hair) and it has been so rewarding to have stayed the course.

What would I tell my younger self, or indeed someone else contemplating the next step?

“It’s just like water skiing, you’ve got to hang on like billy-o until that boat pulls you through, up and out of the wash that threatens to drown you. Only then you can learn how to tackle the wake, master the turns and glide across the water. And by the way, you absolutely don’t know how to do this, but you’ve found the right team to teach you.”

Thank you to all my fellow councillors, my state counterparts, the boys at ABSA (Australian Boarding Schools Association) and the very capable off-council support crew of Sue Shotton, Nikki Macqueen and Judy Newton for teaching me, mentoring me or redirecting me as required.

Hats off to our federal conference convening committees for managing to navigate some interesting obstacles each year and running successful conferences under various trying conditions. (Who would have thought that the 2020 online conference was not going to be our most challenging moving forward?)

And thanks also to each and every one of you, our members, for your part in keeping rural and remote education on the national agenda.

NORTHERN TERRITORY PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Moira Lanzarin

“Unique Land – Unique Learning”

A very warm welcome to our beautiful northern capital. Where else would you want to be in the middle of winter? My sincere thank you to our hardworking convening committee, ably led by the dynamic Sue Wilson, and the equally impressive Federal Council and generous sponsors for making this amazing gathering possible.

“Unique Land – Unique Learning” perfectly sums up the geographically isolated education scenario. I am excited about our time ahead and I trust so are you.

It is with immense pride and humility that I take my turn to stand before you today as NT President and welcome you to our unique and extraordinary Territory. NT people please wave your hand. I am proud of every one of you and what we collectively stand for and have achieved.

ICPA is an endurance relay of epic proportions. Every person doing their bit – doing what they can, when they can. Together, carrying on. 41 and 1/2 years in the NT, 53 years Federally. These are impressive figures. Even more impressive because it is done from a 100% volunteer work base. An antagonist could suggest that if we were a truly successful organisation, we would have solved all the problems by now and no longer be needed. But by the very nature of our charter, working for geographically isolated children and families, there will always be a need for ICPA. We cannot change the geography, and nor would we want to.

Every three years, the NT holds our State Annual Conference and AGM virtually. This year it was via Zoom. “Advocacy from Anywhere” certainly proved to be correct. Our conference delegates rallied together for vigorous but respectful debate to ensure issues important to their children’s education were heard and actioned. Technology and communication systems have come such a long way. It was great to clearly see so many beautiful faces, joining from many diverse settings and hearing their crisp and clear voices. Thank you to those who persisted despite technical glitches and dropouts and learnt alongside us as we all navigated online voting and correct governance processes. Thank you to Federal President Alana and then Queensland President Louise Martin for assisting with due process when needed. Hosting and participating in a virtual conference can be challenging – so it was very humbling and pleasing to hear and see that the conference was not only efficient and effective but also enjoyable.

Enjoyable and important are key factors I believe to the success of ICPA – they are part of the WHY that keeps people volunteering and working hard to achieve better opportunities and outcomes for our children.

Having two of our new Councillors plus Treasurer and Secretary, join with us face to face for the first time at our AGM, was so valuable. Other Councillors actively participated virtually. I confess some envy as I hear about other State Councils regularly all coming together for full face to face meetings. In my time on NT Council, this has not been achieved. But as said before, the NT has its unique characteristics – one of which is us being spread very thin across a very large junk of land. The day after conference, State Council participated in a Values-based, decision-making training session led by Helen Lewis of Decision Design Hub. This is a living, evolving piece of work which will help guide us into the future, ensuring we stay relevant, focused and true to purpose. Part of the vision articulated was:

*“As an Organisation we are relevant and resilient.
We are persistent, strong and powerful in the voice and support we
give to GI families which is positive and solution based.
Our intelligence, professionalism, integrity and knowledge are
respected. We are welcoming, compassionate and inclusive.”*

Connections, relationships, partnerships, mateship, community dynamics – looking after each other and working together. These are what makes a society and when they are working well and are positive and strong, growth and success has fertile ground to flourish. Building and strengthening relationships with members and stakeholders is important and an ongoing activity.

The NT has only three branches – Alice Springs and Katherine who are based around the respective schools of the air, and Territory Wide who is our Lones Branch. Both main branches have seen a changing of the guard as older families move through to the next stage of their education and new families enter. It is beautiful seeing these new faces grow in confidence and skill as they step up to lead and participate.

We have achieved so much and there is so much that should be celebrated and excitedly proclaimed from the roof tops. The achievements of ICPA are huge and varied. Many of the things that we simply take for granted in our everyday lives, educating our children whilst being out bush, is thanks to ICPA: All of our allowances and assistance schemes; many of our institutions; and most of the related policy. If there wasn't a door to open, we have built the door ourselves and walked through. And done so with dignity, respect, professionalism and passion.

If ICPA has a weakness, I think that is that we do not acknowledge, own and celebrate our successes anywhere near enough. We are our harshest critic and always striving for more, pushing ourselves further. As an organisation we need to be better at celebrating and acknowledging our wins and kinder to ourselves regarding our contribution. So, in amongst the rush, please take the time to reflect and acknowledge the efforts and accomplishments – not only of ICPA, and others but also yourself.

The past 12 months has been filled with achievements. My ICPA calendar tells me ICPA NT State Council have participated in 98 meetings and this is not counting individual delegation meetings. Geographically isolated families across the NT are having their voices heard, their stories and issues listened to, and action is occurring.

Just yesterday, I represented ICPA and addressed the Developing North Australia Conference, also being held here in Darwin this week. My message was simple.

- 1. For a sustainable north Australia, there must be families.*
- 2. To keep and retain families they need to have good education options for their children (and communications, health and roads).*
- 3. If families are supported, businesses and communities will prosper with far greater resilience and sustainability.*

The core top five issues for Northern Territory ICPA have remained unchanged for some time. 1.) Improve the NT Student Assistance Schemes for Geographically Isolated families. 2.) Maintenance funding & new funding for Mobile Playgroups to reach geographically isolated children (five years and under). 3.) Early identification, diagnosis, and management of special learning needs. 4.) Continued improvements to accessing affordable and reliable technology and communication systems for geographically isolated education purposes. 5.) A Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) to recognise the substantial financial costs associated with the compulsory role of the remote home tutor. We are making progress but there is still more to be done.

An exciting initiative from ICPA NT this year has been the recognition of the Home Tutor for RPL and the commencement of Certificate 3, 4 or Diploma of Ed, via Charles Darwin University, whilst they are teaching in the home classroom. Congratulations to our first group of Home Tutors undergoing training through Charles Darwin University whilst working full time teaching our bush kids and being recognised for their existing experience in the education journey. This is an exciting pathway, not only for our own children and home tutors but also working towards contributing to solving the national teacher shortage, especially in regional areas.

Through partnership with St Johns, at no-cost to families, first aid training has been able to be made available to home tutors. We are also working closely with Early Childhood Australia (ECA) who are

keen to collaborate with ICPA to improve access to early education for young children in remote areas through policy and program reforms.

Strong collaborations and reconnections with NT Cattlemen's Assoc (NTCA) are occurring and we are currently exploring ways as to how we can work more effectively together. Our geographic landscape and many of our membership overlaps.

These achievements are due to the persistent hard work, and passionate commitment of our strong and amazing Councillors (State and Federal), past and present, and thanks to our membership. #TeamICPA. It is a real pleasure and privilege to work with and for you. To my fellow state Councillors, you are a delight to work with. My congratulations and admiration to Alana and your Federal Council team. Well done.

Thank you for joining us today and I trust that you will find the conference enjoyable and productive and your time in the NT memorable and pleasant.

NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Tanya Mitchell

Madam President, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the President's report on behalf of ICPA NSW.

State Conference 2023

The much-anticipated ICPA NSW 51st State Conference was held in Moree on 22 and 23 March this year and it was wonderful to have over 120 registrations. We had to cancel the previous conference that was to be held in Moree in 2020 due to Covid so it was fantastic for the branch to finally be able to showcase their community.

It was pleasing to see so many members and stakeholders come together to meet in such a great rural community and to once again discuss and debate our concerns and issues surrounding access to education for our children. It was great to have fourteen branches represented and over forty-six members attend during the week. It was certainly a great opportunity to engage in robust, passionate debates over informed conversations, even off the floor and into the evening.

Our conference fell two days before the NSW State Election which saw a change in Government and a sense of uncertainty as to how the change would impact our issues and the motions that members brought to conference.

There were many departmental people attending who are crucial to the work that we do in advocating for members, along with organisations and schools with whom we often work closely and are great friends of our association. Many boarding schools were in attendance and we thank them for all their support in educating rural and remote students.

We were also privileged to have our Federal ICPA representatives Julia Broad and Miffy Waugh in attendance. Their perspective on all matters, and particularly those of a federal nature, is very much appreciated. I also acknowledge the attendance of Mrs Lindy Kitto, one of our Trustees, Moree Life Member Mrs Jane Woods and CWA President Joy Beames.

The theme "Education – The Heart of Communities" is such an important concept for our rural and remote communities to be sustainable.

We all wonder what the future will hold for our children. What lives, what careers they will have, what people they will be. None of those things we can fully know, but we do know that they will have hopes and dreams, and face challenges and problems in differing aspects of their lives as they unfold. Our task as parents and as a community is to make them the best prepared to meet the future as we all go forward. We want our children, together with all other children, to have mountains of opportunity.

A very important part of that preparation is their schooling. Not just education in the narrow sense of NAPLAN testing and ATARs, but a full chance to participate in the opportunities of youth as preparation for life as an adult – academic, vocational, creative, cultural and physical. A full chance to develop potential in whatever sense their own particular nature suggests, and to take that potential and in turn set about creating the best future for the next generation. ICPA wants that opportunity for rural and remote children just as every parent wants that opportunity for their own children.

There were over 60 motions presented and debated on at conference which is 20 less than 2022 so hopefully we are rectifying some issues and ticking them off.

Some updates from the year have been:

- Continuation of the School Drive Subsidy Trial for Preschoolers.
- A \$250 fuel travel card for Apprentices and Tertiary students was implemented by the previous NSW Government (however this has since been removed by the new state government).
- Bus NSW have submitted a proposal to NSW Government to install safety devices to prevent students from being left on buses.
- Early Childhood Wage Review - 5.75% Increase to Children's Services Award and Educational Services Teachers Award From 01 July 2023.
- NBN roll out for nearly all NSW Distance Education families.
- We continue to have monthly meetings with Department of Education Regional, Rural & Remote Education Policy (RRREP) Unit.
- All 12 satellite schools in NSW have been transferred to Fibre Optic connections.

Some may recall the Balranald branch motion back in 2013 at Federal Conference which was lost but a year later carried, so please do not get disheartened if you lose a motion today, as this is what can be achieved if you stay focused and not take no for an answer. Sometimes it may be to look at the issue and present it in a different way. Many thanks to Federal ICPA for their advocacy for these small remote schools.

I would like to say a big welcome to our new State Councillors since last Federal Conference, Britt Anderson, Georgina Luckraft and Kirsty Wilson and a special farewell to Deborah Nielsen who has worked tirelessly on State Council in the Early Childhood Portfolio. Deborah and her family have given so much time to ICPA over the years since inception and continue to be involved moving forward. Also farewell to Amanda McClaren who has been a wealth of knowledge and support in her time as Lone Members Officer. Thank you so much to both of you for your passion and commitment to education for our rural and remote students.

Thank you to all the State Council team and particularly those who have stayed on to continue the work that we do. I certainly appreciate all the support and effort that you make.

Deputation 2023

To follow up from the Moree conference and keep the momentum going after the change of government, our State Council have just returned from our Sydney deputation. It has been a busy time for us since conference but a fairly quiet three months since the change of government as the new Ministers have been getting familiar with their portfolios. We were able to meet with the new NSW Deputy Premier and Education Minister Prue Car. Minister Car had been the Shadow Education Minister so was well aware of our issues and it will be interesting to see if she is able to make the needed changes. This also highlights the need to meet with Shadow Ministers so they can question those in power but then be held accountable when they find themselves in the hot seat. We arranged meetings with 39 Ministers, Shadow Ministers and other stakeholders, local members and partners.

There are a few key priorities that ICPA-NSW would like to see fixed as a matter of priority, issues that continually come to conference:

- A review into Distance Education as the last one was conducted in 2008 and there has been many changes since then but many recommendations have not yet occurred.
- Implementation of the School Drive Subsidy for Preschool & Tertiary Students.
- Increase in VTAS for Apprentices to reflect actual costs for travel to training
- Mental Health Support for Youth.
- Access to Early Childhood education and Allied Health services in remote areas.
- Pay Parity & Incentives for Early Childhood Educators.
- Housing – safe and quality housing for rural and remote teaching staff.
- Road maintenance on roads used by school buses and school student travel.
- Continuation of funding for Country University Centres.
- Continuation of Active & Creative Kids Vouchers which were not budgeted for and have been halved.

The solutions offered by ICPA-NSW are pragmatic and discussions have been positive, however it is a continued frustration for our members that things take years to be implemented and that means for many children, the gaps in their learning and development remains.

ICPA is of course an organisation seeking equity of access to education for all students living in a rural and remote area. But what is it that we are actually seeking? I suggest we can break down that goal putting our efforts into providing our rural and remote children with access to wide and interesting curriculums taught by a great teacher in a school which is led by an effective Principal. We want to start opportunities early making sure that any kids that are likely to fall through the cracks get the special support they need. Our goal, our mission should be to endeavour that no rural or remote child misses the opportunity to have an education that embraces all of these factors. This is the base level of education all our children deserve.

While advancements in education and technology are making the task of providing an appropriate education easier, there are other forces making it more difficult. The demographic story of remoteness is that populations in remote and regional NSW continue to decline, only the largest regional centres grow. The consequent reality is that many small schools will continue to lose populations and the pressure is on the Government and Department to provide resources to metropolitan areas when new schools are needed to cope with population growth. This should not be to the detriment of rural and remote students or cloud the fact that every child, no matter where they live, deserves an appropriate education.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Belinda Hatcher

Madame President, Federal councillors, ICPA members and guests, it gives me great pleasure to present my second President's report for South Australia's ICPA. Unfortunately, our shearing seems to always be on at the same time as Federal Conference and I am disappointed I am unable to be there in person. I hope this PowerPoint with my voice photos of our members and their lives will suffice for this year. I have no doubt that Darwin is turning on some beautiful weather for you all and that it will be a successful and engaging couple of days.

The last half of 2022 saw SA ICPA State Councillors attend a delegation in Adelaide. We had meetings with several stakeholders from the Department for Education, other government departments as well as the Minister for Education. The key areas for discussion were equitable access to online NAPLAN, a state funded DETA type allowance, the consideration for a new and standalone Port Augusta SOTA school site and better service provision for new mothers and infants in remote South Australia. All the meetings we had seemed productive and well received and we walked away feeling confident that our voices were heard and members issues and motions were genuinely being considered. It is always a privilege to be able to give our time to represent and advocate on behalf of SA ICPA members and this privilege is never taken lightly.

On our way home and less than 24 hours after our visit with the Minister we received a document from his office that addressed all the motion letters that were sent to him. The proposed suggestions and solutions to the issues he raised were far from we were hoping for and even though we appreciated the speed at which he responded, we could only think that the small amount of time he and the Labour party had been in office for perhaps contributed to his near sightedness. SA ICPA are working towards better communication and connection with the Minister, his office and the department in the hope that we are able to bring about outcomes that are closer to the requests from our members.

Christmas and New Year seemed to come and go without too much fuss and it was soon time for families to embrace what 2023 was about to throw at them. I am sure that the first days, the last first days and everything in between was full of excitement, bittersweetness and maybe even the odd tear or two as our students started the year and their educational journey for 2023. For us personally, it was the first time in 12 years that we have had only one student at school and the first time in six, loading up the car ready to head back to boarding school with only one child's belongings. No matter what was instore for our young members and their families, I did then and still do now wish them all the very best. No matter where they are or how they are going about it, the education of our children is challenging and the huge effort put in by all involved is commendable.

In February this year Hollie and I travelled to be part of joint State Council and Federal Council catch up in Melbourne. The opportunity to meet our peers from other states is always a special one and after the meeting we both came away with renewed enthusiasm and ideas on how best to support our members' needs and with some fresh new ideas for SA ICPA State Council. Whilst there may be differences in council make-ups, membership numbers and member needs, it is the collective passion of all councillors across the country at every level that makes ICPA such a powerful organisation. To know I have played just a small part in this big family is one of the reasons why I am (and I think why so many others are as well) so inspired to be involved.

While still on the topic of Federal Council, I would like to offer gratitude for and acknowledgement of Alana Moller on her stellar four years as Federal President. Leading the organisation during COVID (amongst all the normal advocacy they do) with so much uncertainty and continuing changes would have been challenging, but she seemed to make it look so easy. The way she could connect with

members at all membership levels is a testament to her ability to be both professional and personal all at the same time. It was a privilege for myself and I am sure many others here today to have had the opportunity to be involved in ICPA while you have been at the helm. The whole of ICPA has gained so much from your time as its leader and there is no doubt that the 2023/24 Federal Council will benefit from the foundations you leave behind. I would also like to say farewell to those councillors hanging up their boots and congratulations to all new and re-standing executives and councillors on your election this year and wish you all the best for the coming 12 months and looking forward to being part of this amazing organisation with you all.

The 2023 State Conference 'Launching Futures since 1972' was held successfully at Woomera in the state North West on the 23rd of March, hosted by the North West Branch and convened by Candice Brown and Petie Rankin. Planning went smoothly and things were going along swimmingly until eleven days before conference when my husband Daniel had a motorbike accident that left him with a badly broken tibia, a subsequent plane ride to Adelaide and a 3-week stint in hospital. Despite my best efforts and many sleepless nights trying to work out if I would be able to make it to Woomera, I made the difficult but right at the time for our family and business to hand over the reins to Hollie Williams, Lisa Slade and Jill Greenfield and stay in Adelaide with Daniel. Hollie was a wonderful and steady support for me leading up to and throughout the course of the day and I am very sure that Jill and Lisa, despite being Immediate Past President and Vice President respectively, didn't think they would be chairing another state conference, but with grace and composure they took over for me and chaired what was to be another excellent conference.

The motions presented and debated were well considered and supported by the branches proposing them and apart from one which was withdrawn by the proposing branch, all were carried without opposition. All the guest speakers seemed to be a hit with members and guests and they all had a way to connect their presentations back to education and the core values of ICPA.

While I got to listen in online, I was disappointed I could not be there in person to be part of the passion and excitement that always comes from listening to engaging speakers. As always, the highlight for me is the branch presentations, which enables members and guests to see what our families have been up to for the year. Seeing our kids and families in their environments, thriving and living life to fullest is such a joy and this year those presentations were outstanding as always. Conference was finished off with a spectacular night of dining and friendship 'Under the Stars' at Arcoona Station. Many thanks to the Willis Family for sharing your special part of South Australia with everyone who attended.

Elections were held at the conclusion of conference and for the first time in a while the SA ICPA State Council is as full as it can be and it was exciting and encouraging to see so many new and returning members put up their hand to be part of council and as the year has progressed they have all been such an asset to have around and work with. Along with myself, the State Council elected at the 2023 AGM were Vice President – Kirsty Williams; Secretary – Hollie Williams; Treasurer – Jodie Keogh and Publicity Officer – Ellen Litchfield. Branch reps and councillors were Michelle Hilder, Mija Reynolds, Helen Williams, Dani Chapman, Jo Drennan, Kristina Crawford, Candice Brown, Edwina Bowie, Katrina Morris, Pamela Cuffe, Di Thomas, Stef Roeske and Jess Bell. As well as the above, the appointed positions for 2023 were: Pipeline Editor – Mija Reynolds; State Webmaster – Lisa Slade; E-Newsletter Editor – Ellen Litchfield Helen Williams; REVISE representative – Georgy Ewing OAC CGC Rep – Petie Rankin and Lone Member officer – Helen Williams.

We said thank you and farewell to outgoing councillors Linda Haydon, Amanda Michael, Louise Kholer and Penny Rasheed who had all been representatives from their branches. Penny has also been the e-newsletter editor and a guru with Mailchimp. As well as those ladies, Helen Williams stepped out of her role as Publicity Officer, but has remained on State Council as a branch

representative. Helen put her hand up last year to take on the role and has always gone out of her way to make sure she did what was needed for the role. We also acknowledged and thanked Michelle Hilder, who finish up her four-year tenure as State Treasurer. A roll she was thrust into but one she devoted her time to, and who did the most amazing job possible. We are lucky that Michelle decided to stay on as part of our State Council team as a branch representative.

We sadly farewelled two of our long-standing members of State Council this year. Firstly, Lisa Slade who has been involved in SA ICPA State Council since 2013 who in that time has been President, Vice President (twice!), and Immediate Past President. During the same time as she was on State Council, Lisa was elected to Federal Council in 2017 as Federal Treasurer and served a four-year term in that role. She then stayed on Federal Council another 12 months as Federal Vice-President. As well as that Lisa has held executive roles at branch level and always lent a hand with any fundraising and branch activities. The saying 'if you want something done ask a busy person' certainly applies to Lisa – not only did she managed her ICPA commitments with what seemed such ease, she did it while working full time and studying!

We have been very lucky that Lisa took on an off-council position to become our State Webmaster. A job she has already applied her trademark commitment to excellence to. Thanks Lisa.

Last but certainly not least we sadly said goodbye to Jill Greenfield who decided to step off State Council this year after many consecutive years volunteering for SA ICPA. She has been a councillor, treasurer, vice-president, president and immediate past president. Her dedication to the organisation and its members has been commendable and quite frankly inspirational. From attending her first State Conference in Woomera in 2001 with a toddler and a baby, to attending this year's conference in Woomera and proudly watching that toddler be our guest speaker, Jill has been a member of and involved in SA ICPA for over 20 years. Jill's leadership has been and still is a steadying presence not only during the unprecedented times of COVID but for all her time served on council and she has handled it with grace and strength. Thanks, Jill, for everything– enjoy this new chapter of your life – we already miss you.

We continue to deliver the Pipeline publication to members bi-annually and it is always wonderful to read about all the comings and goings from members. I personally think that our publication has a great mix of SA ICPA, State Council and member news and is always a pleasure to get in the mail. We sadly farewelled Lynly Kerin from her role as Editor of Pipeline when she announced her retirement in November 2022. Lynly took over the roll from Kerry Williams back in May of 2017 and has done a stellar job ever since.

We were pleased to announce that Mija Reynolds accepted our offer for her to become the editor of Pipeline. Given that she was already the layout editor it made sense for us to ask if she could combine the roles. The experience she had meant that the transition was a smooth one and she has already produced two great editions. Thank you Mija.

SA ICPA would like to acknowledge and thank The Indulkaninna Foundation for their generous donation. Their donation has been put to very good use in the form of bursaries for students, which are being utilised for wide variety of things including new laptops, online music and drama lessons, school uniforms, school camps and SPELD support lessons just to name a few. We look forward to this being an ongoing partnership and are very grateful to be considered in the philanthropic vision for their foundation.

Since this year's State Conference, we have been working hard on putting together and sending out motion letters but despite follow up emails we have only received one response so far. It was disappointing that despite all our early invitations and open communication with State Ministers

including the Education, Agriculture and Regional Roads ministers, that none of them found the time to attend our conference this year. It has been and continues to be something we cannot seem to overcome and it is very frustrating when you try so hard but get very little response in return. When those very Ministers are making well-publicised visits to the north of the state not long after our conference to look at some fabulous but been dead for millions of years fossils but then chose not to visit the very living and breathing little humans and those families they represent, it causes great disappointment and a big realisation that we have a big challenge ahead of us as we navigate building that relationship.

I hope to gain some advice and ideas from other states, who seem to have such a positive connection with their relevant ministers, on what we can do to improve and build this channel of communication and support so that we can see some better outcomes and responses for our members.

I wanted to finish on a personal reflection about guilt. In these past four months since Daniel's accident, I have been overcome by debilitating waves of guilt around me not being able to fulfil my volunteer roles to the best of my ability and not being able to dedicate the time needed to do the jobs that came with the role I signed up for. Sometimes the guilt I felt was far stronger than the gratitude I should have been feeling for the amazing people around me who were pitching in and helping. It has been a big challenge for me to overcome this but with support I have put that behind me and can appreciate and accept that the help was just that – help. Good old fashioned lend a hand to someone in need help. It is now even more important that SA ICPA State Council continues to be a collaborative effort between councillors and members and that no one job is too big for someone to manage. I think going forward as volunteer numbers dwindle across the whole country, this is the approach that is going to be needed to enable organisations like ICPA to continue to be viable. Coming together to share a job or a work load, rather than pushing ourselves to the point where we just cannot or do not want to do something will be the clearest pathway to stability and success. Volunteers are the legends that keep our small communities and organisations going and we need to do all we can to make sure that we value and nurture those who give their precious time, so that they keep putting their hands up to support those who live their lives and educate their children in rural and remote Australia.

Congratulations and thank you to Alana, Federal Council, and the NT State Council for putting on what I can only imagine will be an excellent couple of days for the 52nd Federal Conference in Darwin and for dedicating countless hours of your time to ensure that everyone has an amazing time. Last year I signed off by saying I hope to see you in Darwin but that may have jinxed me so I will just say cheers for now, enjoy conference and I hope to be able to catch up with some of you soon.

QUEENSLAND PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Wendy Henning

Federal President, Mrs Alana Moller, Federal Life Members, State Life Members, Branch Life Members, Distinguished Guests, fellow ICPA members, Ladies and Gentlemen: It gives me great pleasure to present my first Queensland President's report for the 2023 Federal Conference.

It is hard to believe (at the time of writing this report) that nearly a month has passed since the 52nd Queensland ICPA conference was held in Julia Creek. This also means that I do feel fraudulent delivering this report on the past twelve months of activity for Queensland State Council as it was under Louise Martin's tenure as President that the majority of activity has occurred. Truth be told also, it is an "Oh my goodness" moment: fancy me having to write a President's Report for ICPA Qld!

On with ICPA QLD business and this report writing and reflecting on the year that was.

Mid-Year Meeting for Council is such an integral part of the ICPA Qld year. In 2022 it was held in October, with State Councillors packing their bags and heading to Texas. As we all know, travelling and co-ordinating the team to travel always delivers stories and this was very much a part of the 'road trip' with rainfall and flooding being elements in all directions leading to Texas. We were hosted by Southern Downs Branch, and we thoroughly thank the branch for showing us around their part of Queensland and its history too. Two solid days of meetings and strategic planning were achieved whilst Councillors also enjoyed the branch's hospitality and the opportunity to have most of the Council together.

Our November delegations were again very successful. A highlight was learning that the accommodation facilities at the Distance Education Schools was being constructed. Most are now completed except for Longreach, as there has been challenges with sourcing builders so some delays have occurred. It will be a relief to all when this chapter of uncertainty is complete, and the schools and their families can return to having not only access, but the students feeling welcome and a part of their school campuses.

In February, Queensland State Council attended a joint council meeting with Federal Council and all the other State Councils in Melbourne. Annette Boyle and Louise Martin represented Queensland. These meetings are such a valuable experience, with each Council offering such unique perspectives and experience. There is also the opportunity to support the sharing of ideas for the greater benefit of the organisation and our members as a collective.

State Councillors travelled to Brisbane again in February for our first face-to-face meeting and delegations for the calendar year. Our week was packed with meetings, and we appreciate the effort from our Department of Education for continuing to be supportive of ICPA and genuinely listening to the issues in rural and remote education. Upon returning home, Councillors gave motion feedback to branches as the lobbying year was quickly drawing to a close. State Council received positive feedback for the new initiative of compiling all motion feedback into one document for branches to use as a reference when writing future motions.

March became the "ICPA Qld Living Away from Home Allowance Scheme (LAFHAS)" Month, as we embarked on an awareness campaign. After a solid workload for the Financial Assistance Portfolio and Publicity Officer over the Christmas period, it was time for the carefully calculated publicity schedule and campaign to begin! The Financial Assistance portfolio made a submission to Treasury seeking a raise in the LAFHAS to further meet the rising cost of accessing education away from home, where there is no other choice. A special mention must be made of Kate Bradshaw and Melissa Iland for their dedication and commitment to ensuring there was no leaf left unturned. This meant the government had all details, including about the emotional impact of educating our bush kids. Thanks must go to all the Councillors, members and stakeholders who supplied 'media' by providing milk bottle videos, and sharing their own raw and emotive stories about what it would mean to them for a raise in the LAFHAS and why boarding is the only choice for secondary schooling for their families. The piece-de-resistance for ICPA Qld was to hold a press conference outside of Parliament House in Brisbane – to say there were not a few nervous moments, and "oh my goodness, we really are doing this" moments, would not be honest! The press conference was a success with several media outlets (who were not rural based) in attendance, resulting in widespread media coverage and no arrests...and ultimately success!

Over the past twelve months, the Department of Education has seen more inhouse name changes, and streamlining within overarching departmental branches than a hit TikTok release video! Despite this, and with reassurance that Rural and Remote remains an integral part of the Department/Branches, we give thanks to Department of Education Rural and Remote Team for facilitating the meetings with all the relevant representatives. Post Conference, all the motions are

collated and sent to the relevant areas for consideration. This process has not only streamlined our meeting process but the foot traffic of ICPA Qld traipsing through Education House.

At our recent conference in Julia Creek, we were grateful for the strong representation from the Department and the answering of questions and offering of clarification on the Conference floor. Leanne Wright and Dr Grant Webb showed not only their deep understanding of educating and the challenges that all aspects of rural and remote education face, but also listened and immersed themselves in the debate, topics and reality.

ICPA's relationship with the Department of Education continues to reflect the high value they place on our organisation and they have given us an opportunity to sit on several key reference groups, including but not limited to - Rural and Remote Education Reference Group, Early Years Forum, Qld Schools Ethics Committee and Outside School Hours Care Committee. Key Stakeholders are an integral part of ensuring our lobby and connectivity and ICPA Qld is very proud of the great working relationships we have with ABSA, QCAA, AgForce, Telstra, Nbn, QCEC, ISQ, P&Cs Queensland and many others. Knowing that we can communicate with these organisations at any time to assist in our advocacy is invaluable not only to us but also their organisations.

When State Council congregates in Brisbane, a meeting venue is often a topic at the post conference meeting. For the past years we have been very fortunate to be the recipient of the generosity of Carmel Nash and the team at the QCEC offices in Brisbane for the use of their boardroom and web conferencing facilities for our Council meetings along with smokos, lunch and smiling faces. Over time, our Boarding Schools in Brisbane, along with ABSA, ISQ and other stakeholders have also offered to accommodate us when we are in town and the decision was made to share ourselves around, whilst also enjoying and appreciating other venues across Brisbane. To date, we have met at Brisbane Boys Grammar School and Stuartholme School and shortly we will meet at Brisbane Boys' College and Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ).

State Council has undertaken training in how to use Office 365 and the suite of associated products more effectively, as we have recently transitioned from using Dropbox and Zoom to using the suite of Office programs. In August Qld State Council will also partake in Governance Training through Directors Australia, an opportunity for our tireless volunteers to also receive new skills and knowledge.

The 2023 Qld State Conference was such a wonderful conference in so many ways and I would love to pass on my thanks and congratulations to the Julia Creek Branch and Convening Committee. With over 200 in attendance, motions pertaining to every portfolio, awards presented, nominations accepted and perfect winter weather in North Queensland, it was a recipe for an enjoyable and productive few days. The AGM on day two, saw a full State Council elected and ready to begin the council year going forth.

Louise Martin stood down as President and moves into the Immediate Past President role. I would like to thank Louise for her three years as President and look forward to being able to build and capitalise on her knowledge and wisdom, not only of her experience in the role as President, but also her depth of knowledge about all things ICPA. With no Councillors retiring this year, Kate Bradshaw remains as Vice President and is joined by Kasie Scott, who has been a Councillor for four years. Annette Boyle continues as Secretary along with Amanda Clark as Treasurer, both so capable and efficient in their roles. Three new Councillors were elected; new Councillors always bring with them so much excitement to existing council with new perspectives, new considerations, new ideas and thoughts. It can be daunting when thinking of stepping onto Council, but we thank them for putting their hands up and stepping forward. We welcome Sancia Fegan from Mount Isa BOTA Branch, Robyn O'Brien from Far North Queensland and Sonya Shelley from Capricornia BOTA

Branch. Returning Councillors – Kylie Camp, Anneli Day, Megan Easton, Loretta Goodwin, and Tammy Bailey complete Council and this year also continue in their previous portfolios to assist with the transitions within council. Qld State Council really is now represented by a very large array of geography along with varied educational experiences too.

State Council said, 'Thank you' to Louise Winten as our Membership Officer and Christy Bredhauer as the Fundraising Officer, two roles that are so vital to the ongoing success of the organisation and we wish them both all the best as they fill their days with non ICPA activities. Off Council Positions in Queensland are filled and we are thankful to these ladies for putting their hands up and dedicating their time. Tina Barrett from the Mount Isa BOTA Branch joined in the Off-Council position of Membership Officer and Fiona Murray, Charters Towers Branch to the position of Fundraising Officer. Lisa Southern, St George Branch was elected as the solo Editor of *News & Views* after previously being Co-Editor with Jacque Hemming. We thank Jacque for her time and contributions. Tammie Irons is the Qld Web Co-ordinator and Judy Treloar completes the team with the Hospital Schools role.

One major highlight at Julia Creek was presenting Mr Jack Beach with his State Life Membership. Jack has previously received life membership to Federal Council as well as to Julia Creek Branch, so it was fitting to be able to bestow an ICPA Qld Life Membership badge in front of his home branch and his hometown. Jack's knowledge and wisdom of all things ICPA through the three tiers and his experience really are something so beneficial to the organisation historically, but also for the future. I know certainly as the incoming President, I enjoyed my opportunity to speak to Jack and learn so much from him.

Christine McLean was also presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for her tireless work and efforts with all things ICPA, and we would especially like to acknowledge her dedication in producing the 50 Year book that was launched at the Blackall Conference last year.

Neville Dolinski was also presented with a Certificate of Appreciation. Neville is synonymous with Conference, and he has travelled the state ensuring that the sound, recording and audio visuals all run smoothly. Neville is certainly the quiet knowledge-bank of ICPA issues, debates, names and faces having attended more conferences than most in the room!

Unfortunately, Minister Grace Grace MP was unable to join us at Conference, but I am sure anybody who has read any Queensland media at all over the last month will also know that the Director General of Education, Mr Michael De'Ath attended and was able to deliver the news that there was going to be an increase to the LAFHAs. It was really one of those moments that ICPA will talk about for years to come! There was emotion, there was applause, there was gratitude and there was finally just relief that this will make such a change and be felt not only by families but by children and their education.

As we all know, ICPA will continue to make sure that this increase is not the only increase we receive and that families will continue to be considered going forth. It is heartening to know not only from the conference comments, but also, with budget announcements in Queensland, that rural and remote education is currently at the fore of the minds of the current government. State Council should give themselves a pat on the back that we have carved and maintained a positive and respectful relationship with the current Queensland government, and we look forward to continuing to maintain our lobby of all issues at hand.

Conference attendees were extremely delighted to hear from and engage with the Digital Child team as Professor Susan Danby presented their latest research findings and engaged with members. They also had the opportunity to listen firsthand to discussion on the conference floor about the amount

of time children are in front of their screens each school day along with the expectations. ICPA QLD looks forward to sharing further information on how to be involved and useful information on children's digital education and wellbeing.

Queensland State Council representatives are looking forward to heading to Darwin for the Federal Conference. It really is such an opportunity to be able to make sure that our Queensland members' motions and needs are raised and discussed. Queensland State Council has put forward motions again this year. We look forward to attending; we always come back refreshed and motivated. This year we will only just have time to get home unpack and repack before State Council will be heading to Brisbane for delegations in August, where we will raise all the motions that were carried at the 2023 conference, and those motions that we are still working on.

Sponsorship and Partnerships are so valuable to Council, and we are truly grateful for any financial support the organisations give to ICPA Qld. Without them, our lobby would not be able to be run as effectively and efficiently. Every contribution makes a genuine difference and assists all rural and remote children's education in our state.

This year as I look at my role of President with ICPA Queensland, I think one of my main focuses is making sure ICPA becomes a conversation topic for everybody who lives rural and remote. Membership and Conference attendance are two areas of particular interest – we all know how important being a member is, but with that needs to be the increased awareness of how important it is to the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation; likewise with physical attendance at conference. It doesn't matter if you live in town, it doesn't matter if you live just out of town or a long way out of town, ICPA is there for you, your children, your grandchildren and anybody else you know as well. We would love your conversations to also be about ICPA and ensuring everybody you know is aware we are there for them and their children's education. The best thing that they can do for the organisation is to become a member and the next best thing after becoming a member is becoming an active member!

These are two areas of genuine concern not only for Queensland, but the organisation as a whole. Along with rural and remote Australia, and all levels of industry and employment, inequitable access to education does not encourage families to live beyond the perimeter of urban settings. It is as essential now, if not more so, than it has been over the past 52 years, and we need you and everyone else around you to step forward and be a part of our advocacy and our organisation.

Delivering this report is not something I ever imagined I would ever be doing. I am just me, a mum trying her best and yet this incredible organisation has not only given so much to my family, particularly my girls, but little did I know, to me as well. My time given is equalled by what I have gained back as an individual with growth and knowledge for which I shall always be humbled and grateful.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sally Brindal

Madam President, Distinguished Guests, Federal Councillors, ICPA members. It is with great pleasure I present my first report as WA State President.

As I write this report, I am hoping Darwin is preparing to show us vastly different weather to what we managed to provide in Perth last year with gale force winds, power blackouts and delayed flights!

I began my role as State President at our 51st Annual State Conference hosted by the Midwest Branch in March. Like many states, COVID interruptions prevailed in 2022 resulting in our '50 Years A Long

Way Down the Track' conference being postponed to 2023 and our 2022 conference being held online. It was a great feeling to once again be together in person with many past members and ICPA WA Councillors in the room. The stories shared showed us both how far we have come, and how far we still have to go as we work for equity in education for our rural and remote families. It was very moving to see a video message from Mrs Margaret Hoare, the first ICPA WA President wishing us well as we move forward.

The highlight of Conference for many was '*Conversations with ICPA*' hosted by Mr Richard Hudson. Raelene Hall, WA State Life Member, Roma Heath, Founding President Yalgoo Branch, Rossco Foulkes-Taylor, son and husband of WA State Presidents and Roxanne Morrissey, State and Federal Life Member formed a panel sharing the challenges and some very humorous stories about their connection to ICPA and the impact it has had on their lives.

At Conference we were lucky enough to retain all of our current councillors and welcomed Arlene Sutherland, Lakes District Branch, and Jareth Forrester, Meekatharra Air Branch to the team, giving us a full council. As the new president, I am most grateful to have Immediate Past President Sally Brindal continuing on council as well as Kym Ross and Michelle Abbott who have stepped down from Secretary and Treasurer. This year has also seen a changing of the editor baton for our Bits and Pieces magazine. Olivia Ford has taken on the role and it is lovely to see her here today.

A continuing area of concern for our members is the management and services provided by Fairbridge operated Camp Schools. As part of the 2018 Education cuts, the Western Australian State Government leased six camp schools to Fairbridge with the assurance from David Russell, the then CEO of Fairbridge, and the Minister at the time that current services would be maintained and prices remain reasonable. This has not been the case. Kalgoorlie Camp School is a vital facility for the Kal SOTA (School of the Air). Kal Sota uses this facility up to four times a year and have done so for decades. Meetings have been held with current Fairbridge CEO Mirina Muir which highlighted the lack of knowledge by Fairbridge of the purpose and needs of SOTA camps, which are markedly different from urban schools who utilise the facilities. In June we met with the newly appointed Minister for Education, Dr Tony Buti who indicated he was aware of the issues and that reviews were being undertaken to hold Fairbridge accountable.

One of the challenges when working with government and other groups is the changing of positions. On December 13, 2022, we had, after much planning and many changes, secured an online meeting with then Minister for Education Sue Ellery to discuss the Fairbridge Run Camp Schools. As you may be aware, that is the peak of harvest in the Great Southern Region and the last week of primary school, so quite busy, but we knew we could make it work. I had myself all organised: air pods, iPad and ready to log on at 11.30am from the Tambellup Primary School end of year pool fun day at Gnowangerup Pool, when at about 10.00am a cabinet reshuffle was announced, we had a new minister, back to square one!

The WA State Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) remains high on the agenda. As part of the 2018 Education cuts there was a reduction in the Royalties for Regions component of the BAHA which reduced it from \$2135 to \$1320 over a five-year period. Consistent advocacy from ICPA has resulted in it now being increased with CPI so for 2023 families will benefit from an extra \$30 per child, although welcomed, just a mere \$35 000 added to the State Budget. State Council are still seeking a substantial increase as boarding fees continue to rise. Discussions were recently held with Minister for Education Dr Buti and seemed well received. It is very pleasing to see that Queensland has received a maximum \$4000 increase to their Remote Area Tuition Allowance.

Throughout the last year we have held many successful meetings with representatives from the Western Australian Department of Education. Lisa Rodgers, Director General of Education continues to work closely with ICPA WA and we maintain a positive, open and respectful working relationship. Throughout the year we have met with Lisa and many other representatives from the department including Jim Bell, Deputy Director General Student Achievement, Neil Darby, Assistant Executive Director, Steve Beaton, Principal, School of Special Education Needs (SSEN) Behaviour and Engagement, Paul Mathews, Principal, School of Isolated Distance Education (SIDE) and Rob Thomson, Executive Director Infrastructure.

WA State Council continue to be a part of the Education Department's System Alliance Group in 2023 which consists of stakeholders across the whole education sector.

The Rural Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC) is made up of 16 representatives from community, consumer groups and provider groups including ICPA WA and reports directly to the Minister for Education. RREAC had been very quiet with the arrival of COVID, but I am pleased to report that there has been a reinvigoration of RREAC and meetings are being held monthly and regional visits are planned. ICPA WA is very pleased to have Federal Councillor Naomi Obst as our representative.

In 2021 WA State Council made a submission to the Parliamentary Public Accounts committees' review of the Public Transport Authority's (PTA) Student Transport Assistance Policy Framework. It was the first review of School Bus Services in nearly 25 years. On December 22, the State Government tabled its response to the report; of the 40 recommendations 29 were accepted in principle and 11 noted. The recommendation to review the conveyance allowance was noted; an increase has been sought by ICPA for a very long time. The last review was 2002 and linked to CPI to allow for inflation. The current rate is 25.24c/km. The ATO rate for use of a private vehicle for business purposes is 78c/km! State Council has met with John Bailly, School Bus Services and Andrew Catti, Operations Manager and discussed the implementation of recommendations from the Bus Fair Report.

Throughout 2022/2023, ICPA WA has continued to make submissions where appropriate. A submission was made to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Child Developmental Services highlighting the tyranny of distance and the effect of COVID enforcing more isolation and unreasonable wait times for services. On April 4 Kym Ross and myself gave evidence in person to the hearing.

Membership remains a concern for WA. Making member connections must remain a priority and I welcome any advice on how to do this. We hold such a responsibility to those who came before us as ICPA Members, but more so to those who are yet to come as we continue in our advocacy for our rural and remote children and their families.

In closing I would like to thank my fellow councillors and ICPA WA members, without your support and passion, giving your time to others, WA would not be where it is today. To the NT Council, thank you for a great conference, and weather! To Alana and your team, your ongoing support has made me feel very welcome in this role and I believe that the warmth that comes with hearing 'ICPA' is what makes us such a cracking group!

WEB MANAGER'S REPORT

Sue Shotton

Madam President and fellow ICPA Members, it gives me great pleasure to present my final website report as Web Manager. After many years of working with Federal Council, two website developments and the introduction of online payments I have finally decided to retire as a working

ICPA volunteer, however the knowledge I have gained during this time is always available to fellow members when required.

Over the past couple of years with the development of the new website and States now having working ownership of their own great websites the working structure of the current web team is now outdated. Federal Council has been working on a new structure which will give assistance with all things IT. This structure will be inclusive of all participants, State and Federal and will greatly assist in website ownership, training and future development.

Last AGM we said farewell to Jane O'Brien who had been working as the Federal Membership Officer and welcomed Judy Newton into the role. Judy very quickly learnt the ins and outs of the database and has been working well with her State counterparts.

Many changes have occurred regarding the memberships, online payments and the database during this time. The introduction of BrainTree as the payment gateway has been a game-changer with members now being able to use different forms of payment for any purchase through the website such as credit card, PayPal account, Apple Pay and Google Pay. Recurring payments are still being looked at and hopefully after member discussion and required constitutional changes this will be a reality in the near future.

The online database has now been made more available to States so State treasurers or membership officers can now update member information in real time. Editing access has recently been given to States with training manuals created and training underway.

Other website manuals are also being created by users of the website and thanks go to those web team members who are doing these as it is a job that sometimes is hard to commence due to having the knowledge but not the time to document so others can use. Remember that all manuals are works in progress and can be amended by any web user to reflect a different way of doing things.

Many States are now utilising a mini conference website through the ICPA website which seems to be working well. Registrations are being done through the website with some issues occurring which the developer addresses as the issues occur with a better solution for the next time. As with anything to do with IT these websites are works in progress and if something doesn't work exactly how we would like there is the ability to modify things to improve on how it works. If anyone finds something is not working or is cumbersome, please let the web team know so solutions can be found.

Now I would like to stress the importance of being SCAM SMART. It doesn't matter how savvy you might be with IT everyone can get caught out including me. A recent conversation with the Cyber Crime Unit made me realise that you should be suspicious of everything and everyone. During COVID locking us all at home Cyber criminals have developed unique tools and ways to appear normal in the ways they are trying to scam us. They have the ability to change wording in emails and even on invoices. They have ways of impersonating messages in Messengers and then reverting to conversations via emails to confuse us.

There are two major areas everyone should take notice of every day as part of Cyber Awareness

1. Treat everything you receive on technology as suspicious until you can confirm otherwise.
 - a. If you need to pay someone – ask is this normal for this person, ring to confirm and most importantly ring to confirm bank account details as these can all be changed if your emails have been hacked.
 - b. Is the email coming from a person you know or someone pretending to be someone you know. Hover of the sent address and see if it is an email address you are expecting to be that of the person sending it.

- c. Messenger – do you know the person who is sending this message? Act suspiciously if the message is about something you might be selling online. Only reply to messages that have actually been sent through the selling platform and not directly to you via messenger. If in doubt look at the profile of the person sending the message to see if the profile is a new profile and what country that person is from.
 - d. If engaging in any conversation via email or messenger look for clues of a scam – poor grammar, poor spelling, asking for someone else to pick up due to not being available themselves, paying by PayID, freight company paying. All things that might not be legit.
2. If you feel you have been a victim of a scam then please do the following:
 - a. Run a virus scanner for viruses and malware
 - b. Change passwords on email accounts and any online platforms you might use
 - c. Report the crime to your state’s Cyber Police
 - d. If you have paid a fraudulent invoice notify your bank immediately

Please remember that our current website does carry very good security and all emails are not visible to any scammer. As we have seen in the past, scam emails have been sent to various executives and you might feel that there has been a leak on the website with emails but this is not the case. This information can be obtained anywhere and it may appear on numerous computers which may have been compromised. So it is very important to ensure that the responsibility of being cyber smart lies with you and that is why you need to be suspicious of everyone and everything. Stay Safe!!

Finally I would like to thank my web team, state web and membership officers and Federal Council for all the help and assistance you have given me over the past few years. Too many to name individually but you all know who you are. It has been a pleasure to work with ICPA over the years and I have learnt so much during this time. Thank you all.

PEDALS EDITOR’S REPORT

Hannah Calcino

Good morning Federal President Alana Moller, Federal Council, ICPA Members and Special Guests,

My name is Hannah Calcino and I have the great privilege of being editor of ICPA Australia’s Pedals Magazine. While this is my first address as editor, it is also my one year anniversary. 12 months ago, I stood before you all as Alana Moller pinned the Pedals editor badge to me as I began my tenure.

Now, if you’ve been around for a while, you’d know that I had very big shoes to fill. My predecessor Raelene Hall had been at the helm for 17 years and had carefully curated Pedals magazine into what it is today. Fittingly, the current issue (July 2023) of Pedals gives an insight into what Raelene has been up to since hanging up the editor’s hat and moving to the big smoke of Perth for retirement.

Pedals lands in approximately 8,000 mailboxes each quarter and in the last 12 months, in addition to our regular federal contributions, Pedals has published over 72 member contributions. While it’s hard to narrow down, I’d like to take the opportunity to mention a few of my favourite stories seen in Pedals over the last 12 months.

October 2022, Kerryn Geltch wrote about her daughter Emily’s journey with hearing loss and receiving cochlear implants. The story speaks of the lengths that parents in rural Australia go to, both physically and metaphorically, to access appropriate healthcare for their children. Emily is now an energetic 10-year-old and the eldest of four. Each year, the local community of Aramac, QLD organise

a fundraising event for the *Hear and Say Foundation*, a not-for-profit that assists people with hearing loss to listen and speak.

Sonny Driver's valedictory speech at his Year 12 graduation is arguably my favourite story published in the last 12 months. Sonny spent all of his primary schooling in a schoolroom at Elkedra Station. The Driver family own and run Elkedra and Annitowa Stations, a 2.5-million-acre conglomerate 400km northeast of Alice Springs. At 11 years old, Sonny ventured to Adelaide for boarding school. Sonny's journey and transition to the city lights was not always seamless, but Sonny speaks fondly of the skills he had to develop living away from home and the people, both near and far, that helped him along the way.

Who can go past the gorgeous photo of Elsie Heading at Charters Towers ICPA Fit 4 Rural Futures Sports Camp on the cover of the April 2023 edition? Leola Matthews, Charters Towers Branch Publicity Officer, highlights the social and cultural capital distance education students gain during events such as these. 120 students attended the camp which was organised solely by volunteers and relied on fundraising and grants to come to fruition.

Not to be outdone by her son, Amber Driver's recall of how her family got creative when needing to drill a new bore at their property, speaks to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of all bush people. Elkedra Pastoral Company decided that rather than organise the drilling independently, they would bid (and win) Lot 3 of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Gala Dinner Auction. This Lot was particularly significant because the prize was a water bore, donated by Murrarji Water Drilling and all proceeds went to ICPA Alice Springs Branch. By the end of the bidding, the Drivers were the proud owners of a soon-to-be new bore and had inadvertently donated \$34,000 to ICPA Alice Springs branch.

As I celebrate my 1-year anniversary as Pedals editor, there are a few people I'd like to thank.

I am grateful and thankful to Federal President Alana Moller for taking a chance on a girl from the Gold Coast, whose only experience in magazine publication was the fact that she once taught high school English... While my love affair with ICPA began at Mount Isa Branch of the Air's Sports for Bush Kids in 2017, it hasn't been until stepping into the role of Pedals Editor that I truly realised its potential, impact and the extensive advocacy work that spreads to every corner of Australia. A further thanks to Federal Council for their support and to the editors of the relevant state ICPA magazines and State Councils for sharing content that they believe should have a wider audience.

Thank you to every member who has contributed content. Whether it's been voluntarily through your own fruition, or I've pestered you about writing a story for long enough that you finally gave in... I've said it before, and I'll say it again – you are the reason Pedals exists. Without you, we merely wouldn't have any content, we wouldn't have any heart or soul either.

Thank you to my publisher Tracey Dewell, she is worth her weight in gold. Who would've thought you could have such a seamless operation from 2,000kms away (how very ICPA of us).

There's something incredibly inspiring about being in a room full of people who are passionate about the same things you are, and I am honoured to be able to walk with fellow ICPA members now, and into the future, as we stand on the shoulders of giants and continue to advocate for equitable change. Federal council, members and stakeholders, there's something special going on at ICPA and I'm proud to be a part of it.

PORTFOLIO REPORTS

BOARDING/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME REPORT

Wendy Henning

The breadth of the Boarding/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio continues to be extensive although the 2022-2023 Federal Council year has certainly not seen the intense activity which COVID-19 created in the previous two Council years.

Boarding and COVID-19

Fortunately, a semblance of normality has returned in boarding facilities with decreasing COVID-19 complications. ICPA (Aust) remains conscious that the distressing experiences of members during this unprecedented time will not be forgotten and that in the future, we will do everything possible to ensure due consideration is given to our vulnerable rural and remote students. Four motions presented at the 2022 Federal Conference reflected the ongoing concerns of members resulting from the challenging pandemic rules and restrictions for boarding students. Motions raised the need for:

- Boarding staff to be considered as Essential Supervisory Staff at all times,
- Remote boarding students and their immediate families be classified as Essential Travellers in emergency management plans,
- The creation of an essential traveller exemption for interstate students and their families and
- Considerations for the emotional well-being of boarding students.

Following conference, Federal Council wrote to relevant Ministers, MPs and Senators endeavouring to ensure that the motions passed at conference and the situations highlighted therein, served to create heightened awareness and understanding of the issues experienced by rural and remote boarding students and their families to ensure they do not endure the same adversity in any future situations. Federal Council received a response from the Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, advising of the complexities for COVID-19 management and the further difficulties of the various State and Territory jurisdictions setting their own pandemic control plans. The implementation of the National Code for Boarding School Students remains in line with the relevant health advice and State, Territory or non-governmental education authorities.

A key focus for ICPA (Aust) this year has been raising awareness of the ever-increasing out-of-pocket costs associated with accessing boarding school for geographically isolated children or to establish a second home. motions at the 2022 Conference once again reiterated the urgent need for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children Allowance.

Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance

Two motions at the 2022 Federal Conference called for an increase in the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance citing that this would help ease the financial burden on families who grapple with increased boarding fees from their educational facilities. A third motion sought an increase in the Allowance to reflect rising costs of boarding schools resulting from the Direct Measure of Income School Funding Methodology.

ICPA (Aust) has been seeking an increase to the Basic Boarding Allowance for many years. Following the Federal Conference, we corresponded with all relevant Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators requesting an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children Basic Boarding Allowance. Once again calls for an increase to the Allowance along with costings and recommendations was included in the ICPA (Aust) 2023-2024 Pre-budget submission, citing the exponential rising costs of living as one of many factors which justifies a substantial increase. Unfortunately, other than the annual increase with CPI, no substantial boost to the Allowance was made in the Budget. Most

recently, Federal Council focussed extensively on this topic during our May 2023 delegations to Parliament House. We were pleased to receive a degree of understanding from a number of Members of Parliament and Senators we met with and welcomed various commitments to forward this vital issue.

In order to further define and validate our advocacy for an increase to the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance (BBA), Federal Council recently conducted a survey with a cross-section of ICPA members nationwide, seeking updated information on the out-of-pocket expenses endured by geographically isolated families educating their children at boarding school. Responses showed that more than 75% of those surveyed bear out-of-pocket expenses, over above the AIC BBA, of over \$5000.00 per term just for boarding fees and essential travel. That is an out-of-pocket gap of over \$20,000 per year per student. These calculations do not include the additional costs of educating your child away from home. This data is staggering and certainly serves to emphasise the extraordinary cost burden endured by many families. Federal Council would welcome any data or case studies from members to further support this advocacy.

Another motion relating to the AIC again requested a separation of the AIC to include a standalone category for Geographically Isolated Children (AGIC) to ensure that given the growing number of students who receive the AIC for reasons other than geographical isolation, adequate recognition of the unique costs for families who require this payment due to their geographic location and lack of other viable educational options for the student continues. This separation of categories is especially important when advocating for increases to the AIC specifically for geographically isolated students. This request was raised in a motion letter to the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services. We have also taken the opportunity to discuss this in the quarterly meetings held with the Department of Social Services and Services Australia and have been given assurance from their representatives that there is acute recognition of the unique needs of geographically isolated students compared to others within their staff. Federal Council will however continue to raise this issue wherever possible.

Direct Measure of Income (DMI) School Funding Model

ICPA (Aust) has also continued to raise concerns on the impact of the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) funding model for non-government schools and the flow on effect that this will have on school fees and therefore families who have no choice other than to send their children to boarding school to access their compulsory secondary education. Federal Council wrote to the Minister for Social Services and other relevant Ministers regarding this, and the topic was also raised during our October 2022 and May 2023 delegations with specific reference made to the need to increase AIC to mitigate any increased fees as a result of funding shortfalls. Most recently we have raised these issues with the Australian Department of Education's newly appointed Deputy Secretary of Schools Ms Meg Brighton, as well as other department representatives in an endeavour to continue to seek a solution to address these issues which have been identified by our members as most pertinent in relation to access and affordability of boarding schools:

- Effects on the viability of boarding schools essential to education for rural and remote students
- The need for increases in boarding fees further exacerbating financial challenges for rural and remote families, especially families affected by drought, floods and fire.
- The inappropriateness of using the fluctuating taxable incomes of primary producers and farm-reliant businesses
- The fact that the 'capacity to contribute' does not take into account other considerable educational expenses incurred by rural and remote families apart from school fees such as travel, extra-curricular activities, siblings educational costs, distance education costs
- The risk that the collective 'capacity to contribute' of parents in many independent

boarding/day schools will be skewed by metropolitan families at the expense of the smaller rural and remote cohort.

Federal Council's priority is always to ensure educational equity, school viability or educational choice is not diminished for rural and remote students with the implementation of this methodology. ICPA (Aust) has also worked with the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) on this topic, and we understand that organisations such as ABSA and also the Coalition of Regional Independent Schools (CRISA) have also been raising concerns of the impact of the DMI funding model.

Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program

ICPA (Aust) welcomed the announcement in March this year that the Federal Government would be implementing a pilot program which would provide scholarships for students from regional, rural and remote areas, to assist with boarding fees and associated costs for low to middle income families from 2024. The pilot will provide 50 scholarships of \$20 000 per annum for up to six years being made available for low income families and 50 scholarships of \$10 000 per annum for up to six years for low to middle income families. This information is available on the Department of Education website:

<https://www.education.gov.au/commonwealth-regional-scholarship-program>.

While details are currently limited on the eligibility criteria and application process, Federal Council has had the opportunity to be involved in discussions with the Department to provide feedback and recommendations as the scholarship program is being designed. We look forward to sharing further developments with members as they come to fruition.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Wendy Hick and Alana Moller

While rural and remote communications has seen an array of enhancements and improvements over the past few years, the Portfolio remains a focus for Federal Council to guarantee communications services are maintained and continue to be enhanced to ensure our rural and remote students and their families are always provided with adequate communications services commensurate to their needs.

ICPA (Aust) continues to engage with key communications stakeholders in order to raise both ongoing and more time-sensitive topics and issues. ICPA (Aust) remains active in the Rural, Regional and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC), Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) Consumer Panel and Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Consumer Consultative Forum, where members' issues can be put forward. ICPA (Aust) also participates in regular meetings with NBN Co and Telstra, including Telstra Roundtables with representatives from Federal Council and all ICPA State Councils to discuss topics from across the country. We also engage with the Regional Tech Hub on a regular basis and we are able to assist members with communications needs through this channel. ICPA (Aust) welcomed the announcement by the Federal Government on 29 June 2023 to extend funding for the Regional Tech Hub and the work it carries out for a further three years.

Internet Access

The necessity for adequate internet services commensurate to the educational needs of geographically isolated students continues to be brought forward by members and despite rapid growth and enhancements in rural and remote internet connectivity in recent years, ICPA (Aust) is aware there are still challenges. It is also prudent to ensure that despite these improvements, we continue to advocate for services to be maintained and enhanced. ICPA (Aust) encourages members

to raise their specific connectivity challenges and requirements via case studies to be presented to the Federal Government and other stakeholders to ensure that issues can be resolved and future developments are directed to areas with maximum advantage for educational access.

Following the 2022 Federal Conference, ICPA (Aust) wrote to the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications, citing all motions carried at the conference, underpinned by an overall request that adequate internet access be available for all rural and remote students with regard to speed, quality, capabilities and cost of the services. In December 2022, the Minister responded with an acknowledgement of the essential nature of reliable communications and referred to the Federal Government's current investment of over \$2.2 billion into regional telecommunications over the next five years including \$656 million for the Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia (the Plan) and over \$1.6 billion to improve National Broadband Network (NBN) services across regional and remote Australia. ICPA (Aust) looks forward to the future developments which may be seen from the Plan and will ensure members are kept abreast of these.

The nbn Sky Muster service, when first launched in 2016, was a gamechanger for internet access in rural and remote Australia and since then a number of initiatives to improve the service have been implemented, including Sky Muster Plus. Many of these developments have occurred as a result of the direct involvement and requests from ICPA (Aust) and other stakeholders seeking upgraded services for rural and remote residents. nbn continue to commit to enhancing the Sky Muster service and the recent news of the inception of Sky Muster Plus Premium has the potential to resolve some of the major challenges faced by families educating children in rural and remote Australia, including data usage and speed. The key features of this new product include:

- **Uncapped Data Usage***: users can enjoy the flexibility of how they use the internet without worrying about managing a monthly data allowance.
- **Capability to burst faster**: for the first time the 25/5 Mbps wholesale plan can offer burst download speeds of up to 100 Mbps.
- **Lower wholesale pricing**: makes this new plan even more accessible for people in regional and rural Australia.
- More information can be found at the below links:
<https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/.../regional...>
<https://www.nbnco.com.au/.../nbn-unveils-nbn-sky-muster...>
<https://regionaltechhub.org.au/connectivity-news/>

With the continued free installation of nbn Sky Muster equipment for eligible rural and remote residents and a steadfast guarantee from nbn and the Federal Government that this will continue for the foreseeable future, connectivity opportunities and quality for our members have never been better.

Federal Council are steadfast in our commitment to advocate strongly against any future change to the Sky Muster installation process while this service is relied upon by ICPA members to educate their children in rural and remote Australia. At this time, ICPA (Aust) continues to receive assurances on a regular basis from both nbn and the Federal Government that there are no plans to change the installation process for Sky Muster services.

Coupled with the recent Sky Muster enhancements, other new and alternative services now becoming available are potentially pivotal for those families, in particular those who require affordable portable internet products for the delivery of education to students from transient working families in remote locations of Australia. While Federal Council has maintained advocacy with the Federal Government and NBN Co for affordable solutions for these families working in remote locations of Australia, we are aware that alternative services such as Starlink and other

transportable options are becoming more available and may provide a solution to this problem for some, however no subsidy yet exists to assist families with the associated costs of these services.

ICPA (Aust) and nbn have collaborated on a series of short videos to help answer common questions that our members and others may have regarding nbn internet services that are available to them. In these videos, Federal President Alana Moller speaks with Elise Petty, Executive Manager Education and Regional Stakeholder Relations, **nbn**, to learn more about **nbn**, the different types of technologies and nbn SkyMuster® services. We are pleased to be able to share these videos with our members and the videos can be found here:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPWzcyIPvHbJQbLq0BA9H8EQVSJHLhcr7>

Telephone

Federal Council continues to communicate with Telstra and the Federal Government to ensure that the concerns of our members are heard, including roundtable meetings with Telstra personnel, at which representatives from Federal Council and all ICPA State Councils are in attendance.

The importance of the continued advocacy of ICPA (Aust) in the communications field is no more evident than as part of the ongoing concern regarding landline services and the sunseting of the Consumer Service Guarantee (CSG).

In March, ICPA (Aust) welcomed an opportunity to contribute to the Thematic Review of the Consumer Service Guarantee (CSG) Consultation Paper. The CSG regulates the timeframes for connection, repairs and appointments for fixed telephone services and the paper sought feedback and guidance from stakeholders on the future usefulness and continuation of the CSG instruments in light of the scheduled sunseting of the Guarantee on the 1 October 2023. Our feedback was well-defined and simple; that while there are ongoing concerns in the area of communications in rural and remote areas, the current CSG framework should be retained and upheld, along with extending its protections across more services to ensure that all consumers are protected regardless of the service they utilise and even if their communications usage changes over time.

In early June it was pleasing to learn that the Minister had made the decision to continue the CSG for another three years following the Thematic Review, citing that her decision was *“about putting the consumer first again.”* This is a positive and valuable outcome for ICPA members, particularly those who continue to rely on Telstra legacy network services, including copper lines and high-capacity radio concentrators (HCRC), along with those members whose children attend small rural schools that are still dependent on Telstra legacy services for contact to access teacher support, assistance, mentoring, emergency help and general administration tasks of a school. ICPA (Aust)’s full submission can be found here:

<https://icpa.com.au/au/2023-icpa-aust-submissions>

and Minister Rowland’s media release announcing the decision to retain the CSG can be found here:

<https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/rowland/media-release/customer-service-guarantee-fixed-voice-set-continue?fbclid=IwAR19ecmZOSwYWfhRFy6f1Ai30yBaQLfhVrg95fqvMnxBiFT0jzt3ptjPj30>

At the 2022 Conference, ICPA members reiterated the call for their voice services to be maintained to adequate standards and the above announcement by the Minister provides reassurance that this should be occurring. In a response from the Minister following our correspondence sent after the Conference, we were encouraged by her commitment to ensuring residents in Australia have access to telephone services, regardless of where they live or work. The Minister did note however that CSG arrangements may be temporarily suspended where there is a service disruption caused by severe weather or other factors beyond Telstra’s control, however in these situations Telstra must either write to individual customers or publish details of mass service disruptions on their website, which can be accessed on their website:

<https://www.telstra.com.au/consumer-advice/customer-service/mass-service-disruption> and focus must be on getting services back in operation as soon as possible.

Minister Rowland suggested that ICPA (Aust) should provide details of particular geographic problem areas or individual cases where repairing of voice services is particularly poor and there appear to be no extenuating circumstances to the Department of Communications for review. Federal Council therefore encourages members to raise any issues they have with us to be forwarded for review.

ICPA (Aust) has also reasserted the request that existing landline services remain in place and continue to be maintained until a tested, reliable, affordable and appropriate alternative voice service is made available for those living in rural and remote areas. The Minister's response gave reassurance that this would be upheld. The Minister indicated that while the Government is open, in principle, to alternative means of delivering services to the community and acknowledged that there are a number of providers currently testing or rolling out voice services delivered through wireless and low earth orbit satellites, any changes would require measured consideration, consultation and collaboration with relevant stakeholders. She also confirmed that the performance, reliability and cost of alternative services would need to be appropriate to satisfy the needs of users. ICPA (Aust) is encouraged by this commitment.

At every opportunity, ICPA (Aust) has also raised this topic with Telstra, including during the Regional Telecommunications Policy Workshop in late October 2022 and in the meeting with all ICPA Councils held recently. We have also implored that any testing or investigation of alternative services needs to be undertaken in real life situations and in particular in remote locations where our members will be impacted by any changes. We have received assurance from Telstra that this will be the case. Federal Council understands this is a considerable concern for those members who may be impacted and will continue to ensure we maintain robust advocacy on this topic.

Mobile Coverage/Service

Following the Federal Conference, requests were again made to the Federal Government and other stakeholders for the expansion and ongoing maintenance of mobile networks across rural and remote Australia, for both rural schools and for families who rely on mobile coverage for education needs. In correspondence with Minister Rowland, we reiterated the need for small schools that are currently without reliable mobile coverage to be prioritised in future Mobile Black Spot Program rounds or similar future funding programs and where these schools have been provided with mobile coverage, that the footprint of the coverage goes beyond the school grounds. The Minister's response was encouraging, citing that the Government's Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia Plan announced in the October Federal Budget includes \$400 million in funding to boost mobile coverage on regional roads and to improve mobile coverage and resilience in rural and remote communities, which will support improved public safety in regional areas, complementing existing mobile coverage at local schools and other community hubs.

ICPA (Aust)'s correspondence was also sent to relevant MPs and Senators and we welcomed assistance from The Hon Nola Marino MP, Shadow Assistant Minister for Education, who wrote to Minister Rowland supporting our advocacy.

Further to maintenance, upgrade and improvement of mobile coverage, we also raised with the Minister the need to ensure current mobile services have sufficient backup power to provide consistent and uninterrupted delivery, where the education of children is reliant on mobile coverage. We referred to members' known issues with reliability of backup batteries on mobile towers during extended power outages, and the need for a better system of identifying this failure and replacement of expired batteries. The Minister acknowledged these concerns and cited the Government's Mobile Network Hardening Program, which is providing up to \$24.1 million in funding to the mobile network operators to deliver over 1000 projects to strengthen the resilience of regional telecommunications

infrastructure, including over 500 upgrades to battery backup to at least 12 hours as a program aimed at addressing such issues and boosting telecommunications resilience. Consultations were held between the Government and members of the public, the telecommunications industry and government stakeholders on the design of Round 2, including draft Grant Opportunity Guidelines and these consultations closed on 30 May 2023. Following the feedback received during the consultation phase, Round 2 of the Mobile Network Hardening Program is expected to open for applications in the coming months.

The above mobile connectivity topics have also been raised in a number of other forums, including a roundtable with representatives from Telstra and all ICPA Councils, where backup power was discussed extensively. Attendees were assured that Telstra is keenly aware of these concerns and continue to expand their resiliency programs and emergency response for the mobile network. Reference was made to stand alone power systems (SAPS) which are being delivered to more remote areas as well as the early rollout of Automatic Transfer Units, an electronic box/switch that is at the Telstra Exchanges, which will allow emergency services and other non-Telstra personnel to hook up a temporary generator. The key to addressing this issue, particularly in disaster situations, is ensuring that consultation and collaboration occurs between a variety of parties, including Telstra, other voice/data service providers, electricity companies and other organisations such as the Bureau of Meteorology.

ICPA (Aust) welcomed the announcement of Round 3 of Regional Connectivity Program (RCP), bringing together the Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP) and the RCP in two streams with a grant opportunity of up to \$160 million to improve mobile and broadband connectivity in regional, rural and First Nations communities across Australia, with the following features:

- A \$110 million Regional Connectivity (Round 3) stream for place-based solutions that deliver new or upgraded broadband services or upgraded mobile services in eligible locations across Australia; and
- A \$50 million Mobile Black Spot (Round 7) stream that delivers new handheld mobile coverage to rural, regional and remote locations across Australia.

A list of funded projects under Rounds 1 and 2 of the Regional Connectivity Program can be found here:

<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications-arts/internet/regional-connectivity-program> and Federal Council look forward to sharing with members the results of these Rounds. The Regional Connectivity and Mobile Black Spot Grants applications have been extended to 11 August 2023, to allow mobile and broadband providers more time to work with local communities and state and territory governments develop beneficial connectivity solutions. ICPA (Aust) supports any proposed projects which will expand and improve connectivity for our members.

Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellite Services

The potential for Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellite services to enhance rural and remote communications and provide increased choice and opportunities for ICPA members, both in the areas of telephony and internet is becoming more apparent, including those services currently available such as Starlink, as well as emerging developments in this space. In October 2022, the Federal Government announced they would create the Low Earth Orbit Satellite Working Group to examine the future role of satellite technology in delivering telecommunications services and to explore the capability, features, affordability, consumer support and commercial sustainability of LEOsat products. The group will look at the potential role of LEOsats in regional, rural and remote connectivity, including mobile coverage and better delivery of universal telecommunications services. In February 2023, the first meeting of this group was held and included industry participants speaking on their use of satellite technology and opportunities for future growth – particularly in rural and regional communities. The Federal Government expects the Working Group to provide

advice and feedback on possible regulatory reforms to support the industry to ensure telecommunications regulation keeps pace with emerging technologies.

Further to this, in recent months several announcements have been made by key telecommunications companies signalling their intentions to investigate and utilise LEO technology in their networks. In June, nbn announced its intention to explore LEO technology to enhance their connectivity solutions for those within the nbn satellite footprint. A media release on this can be found here:

<https://www.nbnco.com.au/content/dam/nbn/documents/media-centre/media-statements/2023/nbn-co-exploring-connectivity-solutions-with-low-earth-orbit-satellite-providers.pdf>

Also, in June this year, Telstra announced an agreement with OneWeb to deliver one of the world's largest rollouts of OneWeb Low Earth Orbit (LEO) backhaul for a commercial mobile network. In a media release from Telstra on the 23 June, the following key points were noted:

- Later this year Telstra will begin moving hundreds of existing remote mobile base stations currently using satellite backhaul to OneWeb's LEO solution.
- It is envisaged that 25 Gbit/s LEO capacity will enhance the customer experience when using real-time applications such as voice and video calling.
- The deal aims to improve options for consumers, small business and enterprise customers living or working in rural and regional Australia, especially in remote areas.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.telstra.com.au/exchange/improving-connectivity-in-remote-areas-with-satellites>.

Further to this announcement, in early July, Telstra again reaffirmed its commitment to providing connectivity options for their consumer and business customers utilising a satellite product, announcing they have signed an agreement to become the first provider in the world to offer voice-only and voice plus broadband powered by Starlink to rural and remote Telstra customers. ICPA (Aust) looks forward to working closely with Telstra in order to understand future developments for our members from this agreement. More information can be found here:

<https://exchange.telstra.com.au/were-working-with-starlink-to-connect-more-people-in-remote-australia/>

ICPA (Aust) understands the potential for LEO technology to provide improved and alternative choices and options for our members. However, we continue to maintain that it is essential that any changes to current services should not be made unless an equivalent or better alternative is available and that rural and remote residents are not left with communications reliant on only one source. We will keep members informed of any future developments in regard to further information or developments in the LEO satellite services space and assure members their interests continue to be represented as these technologies are explored, established and advanced.

Distance Education Materials

A motion carried at the 2022 Conference sought that geographically isolated distance education school materials be classified as essential mail and as such, their delivery be prioritised during mail disruptions, such as a natural disaster. Federal Council raised this request with the Minister for Communications, whom has jurisdiction over Australia Post, citing the case study included with the motion. The Minister contacted Australia Post directly for clarity on the situation noted and both the Minister and Australia Post recognised the critical importance of adequate postal services for those in regional, rural and remote areas and the great concern that delays have on the people in these communities. However, Australia Post advised that it is not possible to identify articles containing school supplies or prioritise such items. It was highlighted though that in an extreme weather event,

Express Post items are amongst the first delivered and therefore it was recommended that the Express Post service be utilised to ensure educational items are expedited through the network in these circumstances. ICPA (Aust) trusts this may assist members in future circumstances.

The Communications Portfolio continues to be an eventful, yet often gratifying portfolio when exciting and positive developments occur. I would like to thank all of the Councillors who have assisted with the Portfolio over the past twelve months, including Wendy Henning, Laura Stalley, Ali Allison and Kylie Toynton.

CURRICULUM REPORT

Alana Moller

The Curriculum Portfolio continues to focus on key topics surrounding the National Curriculum, including the roll out of Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum, inclusion of food and fibre production within the curriculum and the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing. Federal Council continues to hold a position on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) Peak Parents and Principals Forum, which provides direct lines of contact with ACARA and the opportunity to raise member's issues.

Australian Curriculum

Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum was released in 2022 and it is noted that the new version aims to be *“more manageable for teachers and clearly identifies the essential content our children should learn”*. Following its release, State Governments are now responsible for its implementation in their respective jurisdictions. ACARA designed a dedicated website to support the roll out of the new curriculum across the country, which can be found here: <https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>

National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

Following on from a motion presented at the 2022 Federal Conference raising concerns about the challenges of accessing NAPLAN testing for some geographically isolated families whose children are educated via distance education, ICPA (Aust) wrote to ACARA and the Federal Government. The case study which accompanied the motion was also sent with this correspondence. The issue was also raised at the ACARA Peak Principal and Parents forums and during delegations in October 2022. Feedback from all discussions indicated that these situations should not occur based on the guidelines for NAPLAN testing, which provide solutions for unique circumstances. Both Federal Government Ministers and ACARA representatives assured Federal Council that efforts will continue to avoid such situations and to ensure that all schools and jurisdictions are adhering to these directives.

Regrettably, despite assurances to the contrary, similar circumstances occurred prior to the 2023 testing window. Federal Council again contacted ACARA and were provided with a guarantee that these concerns would be addressed with the schools and jurisdictions in question. At our May delegations, Federal Council also took the opportunity to raise this with the Assistant Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm and he advised he had received a NAPLAN briefing on how this year's testing transpired and this briefing would be examined during May Senate Estimates to establish the efficacy of the testing. The Senator also indicated that NAPLAN topics would be looked at as part of the School Reform Panel Review. ICPA (Aust) will also endeavour to address the topic when taking part in the Review.

Another motion regarding access to testing for geographically isolated students was carried at conference, where members raised concern that as a result of some rural and remote students being unable to participate in both NAPLAN testing and other similar external examinations, their eligibility to enrol in some boarding schools may be impacted due to the possibility of schools having certain prerequisite requirements for admission. ICPA (Aust) sought assurance from the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) and other organisations that boarding schools understand that as a result

of geographic isolation, some students are unable to complete these prerequisites that due consideration is required in these circumstances. Federal Council were assured that this would be passed on to boarding schools across Australia.

ICPA (Aust) assisted ACARA in sharing a parent survey prior to the testing taking place, seeking feedback on how parents felt about the NAPLAN changes implemented to 2023, including the testing window being moved to March from May, particularly encouraging geographically isolated families to participate to ensure their unique voices were heard. There have also been recent changes to proficiency standards as part of the reporting of NAPLAN results, aiming to make better use of the online adaptive tests to deliver better information for parents, carers and teachers, which may be of interest to members. A media release from ACARA related to this can be found here:

<https://www.acara.edu.au/docs/default-source/media-releases/naplan-proficiency-standards-media-release-2023-02-10.pdf>

As 2023 results and information are released, Federal Council will ensure members are kept abreast of any developments or important outcomes. Alternatively, members can access the dedicated NAPLAN website here: <https://www.nap.edu.au/>

ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate that any changes to NAPLAN be made with the unique circumstances of geographically isolated students in mind, particularly in regard to accessibility, now even more pertinent with the move to online testing. In a number of forums Federal Council particularly highlight that considerations need to be made for geographically isolated students who may have difficulty accessing a school for testing due to distance, and others who may have difficulty taking part in NAPLAN in an online format due to being in a remote area without internet access.

Food and Fibre Production in the Curriculum

During our May 2023 delegations, Assistant Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm informed us of a recent roundtable he attended in Brisbane organised by Anthony Lee, CEO Australian Country Choice, which focused on expanding agriculture's role in education and specifically food and fibre production education. The Primary Industries Education Foundation of Australia (PIEFA), who ICPA (Aust) has worked with previously, was also a part of this roundtable. Senator Chisholm encouraged ICPA (Aust) to collaborate with other stakeholders in this space and undertook to connect Federal Council with Mr Lee.

Federal Council encourages members to continue to raise any concerns or issues they feel need to be addressed at any time and we will endeavour to ensure these are raised with the appropriate authorities. We also encourage members to engage with the ACARA suite of websites whereby a variety of information and resources related to all curriculum topics is housed at:

<https://www.acara.edu.au/>

Many thanks to my Curriculum Portfolio colleagues, Wendy Hick and Wendy Henning, along with all of Federal Council for their support this year.

DISTANCE EDUCATION REPORT

Ali Allison

For so many geographically isolated families distance education is a necessity, and the only way that our children can receive their compulsory education, particularly in primary school, because of where we live. Travelling every day to a local school is impossible due to the geographically isolated locations of our homes. We have no choice.

For many Mums, that means sacrificing their place in the paid workforce as they take on the role of Home Tutor, often for an extended length of time. For others, as it is impractical for Mum to take on the role, it can mean finding the right person to welcome into their homes to take on the role as home tutor of their children. Or it can mean finding extra workers to fill in the role on farm/property that Mum may normally play, as she needs to be in the schoolroom full time.

All of us manage the way we navigate our journey through distance education differently. But there is one universal truth, it can be a stressful, onerous and expensive task for families to provide their children with the best education they can via distance education.

My children have completed their primary distance education and I am no longer in the schoolroom full time. I have mixed feelings about this, I miss spending my days with our boys and watching them grow and learn, it was such a rewarding time. But one of my overwhelming feelings is “How did I do that?!” When they finished, I was worried that I would get bored- how naïve was I!! Between running our business, a part time teaching role in town, running a household and being a Mum I am kept extremely busy, which I love. But what concerns me is how I used to manage all this as well as being a full time distance education home tutor?

This is the reality for so many geographically isolated families, and we just keep going, keep fulfilling our role and doing amazing work providing the best education we can for our children. Which is why ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for geographically isolated families educating their children through distance education.

Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA)

Motions calling for a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) continue to be brought to Federal Conference. After conference in 2022 ICPA (Aust) wrote to the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP, and all relevant Ministers, Senators and Members of Parliament calling for the establishment of a DETA, outlining the possible financial loss and implications of a mother undertaking the distance education tutor role and all the other demands that providing a home tutor for their children places on geographically isolated families. Following on from COVID-19, a newfound empathy for the challenges of teaching children at home and the election of a new government, Federal Council felt a certain level of positivity and optimism that our advocacy may not fall on deaf ears.

Coupled with the Australian Government’s commitment to the importance of participation of women in the workforce, we sent a letter to the Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, highlighting the impact of taking on the role of a distance education tutor in geographically isolated locations has on women’s employment opportunities and financial status and the impact on family businesses when the mother is taken out of crucial roles in the office, paddock and much more, to take up the responsibility of full-time tutor. In a response received from the Minister in September 2022, unfortunately she indicated that the issue was only related to education so did not consider our reference to the impact of this on rural and remote women.

Further, both in a reply received from the Minister for Education and during meeting delegations to Canberra we continue to receive the message that ‘the day-to-day operations of schooling, including teaching and supervision, is a matter for State Education Ministers.’ This continues to be a great concern for ICPA (Aust) as the role of a geographically isolated distance education tutor is a similar undertaking regardless of what State or Territory you live in. The financial burden placed on families is significant and we continue to maintain that the most equitable way to recognise and remunerate the small number of geographically isolated families educating their children via distance education is by an allowance that is closely aligned with the Federal Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance.

During our delegation meeting in May 2023 with the Assistant Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm, we again requested that the topic be tabled at an Education Ministers Meeting (EMM) This meeting is a forum where all State, Territory and Federal Education Ministers collaborate on decision making regarding education across the country.

ICPA (Aust) firmly believes we need to continue to campaign strongly in this space and keep telling the story of the plight of geographically isolated families faced with the task of teaching their own children due to where they reside. Federal Council are seeking involvement from ICPA members from across the country willing to share their stories and a 'face' to our campaign.

Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Eligibility Criteria

ICPA (Aust) continues to work closely with the Department of Social Services and Services Australia on issues relevant to members. Through this positive relationship we have also been able to raise individual AIC cases for members. We have received positive outcomes for some families who had previously been unsuccessful with their AIC-Distance Education (AIC-DE) applications. Federal Council encourages members to reach out should they have any concerns regarding their AIC payments or eligibility and we can endeavour to raise these with the relevant Departments if appropriate.

Student Wellbeing Boost

Concerns were raised at last year's conference that due to their context, distance education schools and Schools of the Air may not be considered in student support programs designed by the Federal Government to be implemented in schools, particularly in relation to the Student Wellbeing Boost. In a joint media release earlier this year from Minister for Education Hon Jason Clare MP and Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health it was noted that the Student Wellbeing Boost is a 'delivery of additional one-off funding for extra mental health and wellbeing resources and initiatives', 'with schools receiving on average \$20,000 for use in the 2023 school year.'

In correspondence and meetings with the Federal Minister for Education, we were reassured that these schools would definitely have an opportunity to participate in this program. We would encourage members to contact their school principal regarding how this program is being utilised in their school.

Equitable access to education, regardless of where you live, is an important issue to all of us who live in rural and remote Australia, particularly those of us who live in geographically isolated locations who have no choice other than to provide our children with the best education possible through distance education. ICPA (Aust) will continue to advocate on behalf of all our members to ensure that all our children living in rural and remote Australia have the best educational opportunities possible.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE REPORT

Julia Broad

ICPA (Aust) has taken many opportunities this year to raise the inequities faced by rural and remote families in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector, in attempt to shape the services provided to support the education, wellbeing and development of Australia's rural and remote children. 2023 has been the year of review and consultation for ECEC in Australia. The Federal Department of Education Early Childhood and Youth Section has been conducting a comprehensive review of all early childhood programs and systems and Federal Council has attended consultations and lodged submissions for the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill, a market research project by Deloitte Access Economics, the Early Years Vision, the Early Years Strategy, In Home Care Review and the Productivity Commission review of ECEC in Australia. At the

time of writing, outcomes from these reviews are not yet available, however Federal Council will ensure members are informed as developments occur.

The issues that have been repeatedly raised in these submissions and in our advocacy this year include the need for:

- Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) for 3-4 year olds.
- A rural and remote In Home Education program that will allow children to learn, develop and thrive, including the introduction of guidelines to regulate the fees that In Home Care providers can charge to families and educators.
- Long term continuity of funding for rural and remote mobile learning services.
- Access to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for unique rural and remote ECEC programs.
- Specific rural and remote staff incentives to support the staffing of these programs.
- A National Working with Children Check.

Along with the current review of the In Home Care program, there is an In Home Care Quality and Safety Project being implemented by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) over the next two years. It aims to build on the strengths of the existing In Home Care framework. Phase one of the project will focus on the development of an enhanced IHC national framework and supporting IHC Standards, and an approach to pilot the standards with a sample group of IHC Support Agencies, Providers and Educators which will be delivered by the end of 2023. Phase two of the project will involve implementation of the enhanced IHC framework through a pilot and supported by a professional development program from early 2024 which will be designed to build awareness, knowledge and capability through eLearning modules, webinars and workshops. An ongoing professional practice network will be implemented.

Meeting with the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Care, the Hon. Dr Anne Aly MP during our October 2022 delegation, gave us another great opportunity to present our members' issues. Minister Aly was definitely open minded and has aspirations of improving ECEC across Australia. Federal Council also raised all ECEC issues again with many Members of Parliament and Senators during our most recent delegation in May. Senator Matt O'Sullivan and Senator Ross Cadell undertook to take questions to senate estimates on behalf of Federal Council and the following question was put forward; *Why are students participating in approved Early Childhood Distance Education programs ineligible to receive the AIC Distance Education allowance?* We look forward to the result of that process. Senator Perin Davey also raised issues surrounding rural and remote Early Childhood Education and Care during senate estimates hearings. Federal Council are encouraged by the support of these and other members and senators.

The 2023-24 Pre-Budget Submission lodged by ICPA (Aust) once again included Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) for 3-4 year old geographically isolated children and surety of funding for mobile early learning programs. ICPA (Aust)'s advocacy in regard to these topics continues to cite the recommendation from the 2020 Report into Education in Remote and Complex Environments, namely that the Commonwealth implement AIC for 3-4 year olds to support early childhood education and that funding arrangements be modified for mobile early childhood education to provide flexibility and surety of funding for these services were not allocated in the 2021 Budget as per the recommendations, nor any subsequent Federal Budgets .

Federal President, Alana Moller recently attended a Rural and Regional Childcare Roundtable facilitated by Grain Growers. This brought together prominent leaders and stakeholders to discuss childcare issues in regional and remote communities with Minister for Early Childhood Education and Care, the Honourable Dr Anne Aly MP to discuss cost and availability of childcare in regional areas which is putting pressure on our primary producers who are already faced with workforce

constraints. Grain Growers seek to undertake further research on potential solutions for rural and regional childcare during 2023, and Alana's insights at this roundtable have helped shape the formation of that work.

Thank you to our Federal Early Childhood Education and Care team of Alana, Laura, Kylie, Wendy and Ali for your support and guidance as I have developed my understanding of this portfolio and lodged the many submissions. I look forward to working with you further on these important issues.

RURAL SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL TRAVEL REPORT

Naomi Obst

Rural Schools across Australia have in many cases returned to normal after the huge disruptions caused by the pandemic. In some areas of the curriculum the necessity to quickly upskill to provide learning online has enhanced the skills of the whole school community.

In the travel space, concerns continue for many families that rely on flights to attend boarding schools for compulsory education. Fares continue to stay high post pandemic and in many cases are higher.

The 2022 Federal Conference in Perth saw two motions presented in the Rural Schools and School Travel Portfolio, in relation to a Student Concessional Fares and the installation of sensor devices on buses that transport children.

Student Concessional Fares

The request for Student Concessional Fares continues to be a topic of concern for many of our members. The current climate of very high airfares and an unusually high demand for air travel since the pandemic has seen airfares continue to rise and in many cases are more expensive than pre-pandemic fares.

During Federal Council delegation meetings in Canberra in October 2022 and again in May 2023 councillors spoke with Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators to remind them of the expense of air travel for students accessing compulsory schooling. Whilst sympathetic to our plight, airlines are filling seats with the current high prices so the appetite to offer discounted fares is simply not there. Our advocacy continues to call for the inclusion of a fares allowance similar to that in place for ABSTUDY and within the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme.

Several programs have been instigated by various airlines and State Governments since the pandemic which partially address the high cost of airfares for regional residents. However, these programs are not specifically designed to address students and their unique travel needs. We are hopeful that, as part of recognition by Government and airlines of the needs of regional and rural Australia, coupled with continued advocacy from ICPA (Aust) we will eventually see a Student Concessional Fare. The current programs which Federal Council are aware of which may assist members include:

REX: It is pleasing to see that the expansion of the airline REX throughout Australia has enabled the introduction of the "Community Fare." There are various rules that need to be followed in order to qualify: <https://www.rex.com.au/CommunityFares/default.aspx>

Qantas: Qantas has introduced the “Australian Resident Fares” program which offers residents from Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia discounted domestic economy return airfares from their local regional airport to their nearest capital city or major town.

<https://www.qantas.com/au/en/frequent-flyer/member-specials/discounted-fares-for-residents.html#booking-conditions>

WA: The Western Australia Government has introduced a Regional Airfare Zone Cap which will extend to June 2025.

<https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/aviation/regional-airfare-zone-cap.asp>

Bonza – Here for Allstralia: Bonza is Australia’s new and only independent, low cost airline servicing domestic and regional routes in Australia. They plan to operate 27 routes to 17 destinations (subject to regulatory approval) 93% of which are not currently serviced by an airline.

<http://flybonza.com/>

Sensor Devices on School Buses

During the October 2022 and May 2023 face to face meetings in Canberra this concern was raised with various MPs and Senators. Many were surprised at the need for such a device and saw road conditions in rural areas as more of a safety priority. Nonetheless we were able to explain the recent tragedies and near misses that had occurred on buses with children being left behind in locked buses where locations can be remote and temperatures extreme.

ICPA (Aust) received correspondence from the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP in response to our letter raising the request for the installation of sensors on buses. Minister Clare appreciated our concerns and the pressures placed on drivers and teachers who may undertake multiple roles to keep their students safe during transportation. However, he advised that the decision about the type of buses used and their safety features, is made by either the relevant State and Territory Governments or local government area. The Minister suggested that ICPA (Aust) reach out to State and Territory Ministers to assist in finding the appropriate contacts to further this concern.

Despite this response, noting that the 2022 motion referred to school and childcare buses, Federal Council has since become aware of new national transportation rules implemented on 1 March for centre-based childcare services that provide regular transportation, whereby persons with management or control (PMCs) have these new obligations:

- ensuring that a staff member or nominated supervisor, who is not the driver, accounts for and makes a record of children as they get in or out of a vehicle at a service
- ensuring records are made confirming a completed check of the inside of a vehicle at the service, after all children have left to ensure no children remain
- notifying the regulatory authority when your service starts providing or arranging regular transport, and again when your service finishes providing or arranging transport, which can be done via the [National Quality Agenda IT System](#).

Those who do not meet these requirements, will incur a financial penalty of at least \$2,000. Further details are available on the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website [ACECQA](#).

Federal Council are also pleased to inform members of the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) stricter vehicle safety system for 2023, which includes an alert system that detects when a child has been left in a locked car. Some vehicles are already fitted with devices that will alert drivers when the car is turned off.

In their 2023 Statement ANCAP noted:

Child Presence Detection: Vehicles will be assessed for their ability to notify the driver or emergency services if a child has inadvertently been left in a locked car. Child Presence Detection (CPD) systems monitor the rear seats and/or doors and provide a visual or audible warning through the vehicle’s infotainment system upon exiting, a honk of the car horn, a notification or alert to an app on the driver’s mobile phone, or an “eCall” alert to emergency services. More advanced systems may also have the ability to automatically open the windows of the vehicle or activate the vehicles air conditioning system.

Prior to the return of the 2023 school year, it was pleasing to see that the Queensland Government took steps towards education and awareness that may assist in the prevention of further tragedies, launching a catch-cry -“look before you lock”. ICPA (Aust) believes a program of this nature could potentially be rolled out all over Australia while we continue to wait for technology to catch up with a sensor system in all buses.

OTHER PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY

Federal Council also continued to stay abreast of other topics relevant to the Rural Schools and School Travel Portfolio and particularly wish to draw members’ attention to several developments over the past 12 months.

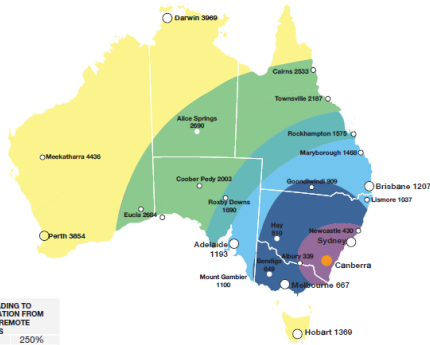
Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER)

In 2020, a motion carried at the Federal Conference requested an increase to the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) for students’ travel to Canberra to enhance their learning in civics and citizenship education, with particular reference to concern of the incongruity within the program at the time that rebates did not take into account the extra costs borne by rural and remote students for travel to Canberra compared to large urban centre counterparts. ICPA (Aust) raised this concern with the government at the time and while we welcomed an increase to the PACER across all rebates in 2021, this still did not address the anomaly associated with the methodology used to determine the allocation of funds to recognise the extra costs associated with travel from a rural or remote area compared to a large urban centre. For example, using the methodology, a student from Adelaide received the same rebate as a student from Innamincka.

ICPA (Aust) had continued to include this topic within our advocacy and welcomed the revisitation of program earlier this year by Minister Clare, who addressed this anomaly. New guidelines mean that additional rebates will now be available for schools from outer regional, remote and very remote areas and for disadvantaged schools.

2023 PACER ZONES WITH ADDITIONAL LOADINGS

FOR SCHOOLS WITH ICSEA 1000 OR LESS AND REGIONAL OR REMOTE SCHOOLS



ZONE	DISTANCE (KMS)	STANDARD REBATE PER STUDENT	50% ADDITIONAL REBATE 2023	ADDITIONAL LOADING SCHOOLS ICSEA 1000 OR LESS		ADDITIONAL LOADING TO ATTRACT PARTICIPATION FROM REGIONAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS		
				50% ICSEA 1000 or below	150% Outer regional	200% Remote	250% Very Remote	
0	0 - 149	\$5	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
1	150 - 499	\$20	\$30	\$15	\$45	\$60	\$75	
2	500 - 999	\$30	\$45	\$22.50	\$67.50	\$90	\$112.50	
3	1000 - 1499	\$60	\$90	\$45	\$135	\$180	\$225	
4	1500 - 1999	\$100	\$150	\$75	\$225	\$300	\$375	
5	2000 - 2999	N/A	\$300	\$150	\$450	\$600	\$750	
6	3000 +	N/A	\$510	\$255	\$765	\$1,020	\$1,275	

NOTES:
 Remote islands get an extra \$120 for additional flight costs
 Additional loadings are calculated to include the 50% additional rebate

The new methodology for funding is shown on the map below and more information can be found in the Minister's media release:

<https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/making-it-easier-students-across-country-visit-parliament-house-and-australian-war-memorial> and on the PACER website www.pacer.org.au.

National School Chaplaincy Program

In June 2023, the Australian Government released further details on the changes made to the Chaplaincy Program now known as "The National Student Wellbeing Program" (NSWP). ICPA (Aust) members have recurrently maintained their support for the National School Chaplaincy Program and their desire for it to continue. In September 2022, Federal Council lodged a submission to the *independent evaluation of the National School Chaplaincy Program* emphasising ICPA (Aust) members view of the positive and valuable impact the program has had for rural and remote students and schools who, due to their location, may have limited access to other support services. ICPA (Aust) recommended that the program be maintained to ensure the vulnerable cohort of rural and remote students who may have no or limited access to other support services are not further disadvantaged. Federal Council were encouraged by Minister Clare's commitment to maintaining the program, in some form, when meeting with him during delegations in October 2022. A copy of the ICPA (Aust) Submission can be found here: <https://icpa.com.au/au/2022-icpa-aust-submissions>

In November 2022, the evaluation report was handed down, with six recommendations made. The full report can be found here <https://www.education.gov.au/national-student-wellbeing-program-nswp/announcements/national-school-chaplaincy-program-evaluation-report>

The Federal Department of Education website notes that *"the independent evaluation of the NSCP found that it provided valued support for the wellbeing of students and school communities. Recommendation 4 of the Evaluation specifically supported the Government's decision to open up the program in 2023 to provide schools with the choice to employ either Student Wellbeing Officers or Chaplains.*

The NSWP will be funded \$61.4 million each year as an Australian Government contribution to the wellbeing of school communities. This funding is provided to states and territories who are responsible for administering the program. Remote or very remote schools can receive up to \$24,336 per year.

Principals can organise a NSWP to meet the needs of their school community. Parents will need to be notified and can choose to withdraw their child from the program at regular intervals. All NSWP officers must complete an online 2 ½ hour Professional Learning Package in responding to and preventing cyberbullying within three months of starting the service and revisit the module every 2 ½ years to maintain their certificate of completion.

Teacher Workforce

Nationwide teacher workforce shortages across the country have been well publicised, however for rural and remote locations these issues can be even more challenging, due to the nature of working in these contexts. ICPA (Aust) welcomes the Federal Government's development of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan and has been involved in various aspects of the Plan including lodging an online submission to the Plan in December 2022.

We addressed key issues specifically related to initial teacher education, teachers, and teaching in rural and remote Australia. Education providers must ensure that the initial education content delivered both theoretical and practical, is contextually appropriate and that all teachers working in geographically isolated schools are specifically trained and prepared to teach this cohort. Authentic social and emotional support of students will help address the behavioural issues that continually

interrupt effective teaching in many classrooms. Specific behaviour and classroom management strategies need to be part of all initial teacher education courses. Clear and definite networks of sharing effective and successful systems between teachers at rural and remote schools to facilitate a culture of mentoring and collegiality across regions could avoid the time consuming “re-inventing the wheel” at separate schools.

Elevation of a culture that supports, values and respects teachers, with incentives to draw them to rural and remote regions so they feel well prepared and classroom ready will alleviate many of the reasons teachers leave their profession.

Federal Council also welcomed and wish to draw member’s attention to the *Reduction of Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts for teachers in very remote areas*. This is a positive acknowledgement of additional challenges felt in very remote areas and hopefully is an encouraging first step in better supporting all very remote, remote and rural teachers, students and schools. More information on this new scheme can be found here <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-loan-program/reduction-help-debts-teachers-very-remote-areas>

Conclusion

I would like to thank members for their contributions to the Rural School and School Travel portfolio. Your motions, explanations and case studies are what drives the direction of this portfolio. Grateful thanks to fellow portfolio members who are always on hand to assist with clarification, explanation, or technical IT directions!

It has been my pleasure to lead this portfolio and I look forward to seeing further developments and successes to both new motions and those more long-standing motions in the times ahead.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS REPORT

Laura Stalley

The ICPA (Aust) Specific Education Needs Portfolio are pleased to report that this year there have been several announcements relating to this portfolio from the Federal Government that will benefit our rural and remote children. At last year’s Federal Conference, four motions were carried focusing on access to medical and allied health services for our rural and remote children. Two of these motions have been presented at previous conferences and several raised again this year. Federal Council encourages members to continue to provide updated case studies for our advocacy.

After conference Federal Council sent correspondence to the appropriate Ministers and organisations in relation to the following motions. We also continue to bring these issues to attention at delegations as well as in meetings with stakeholders:

- Permanent Medicare Benefits Schedule item number for telehealth consultations be assigned to Allied Health Services to support specific educational needs and learning difficulties of geographically isolated children.
- The request for rebates provided by private health insurers to be extended to allied health services delivered via telehealth.
- The need for Federally funded health clinics to be accessible to all Australians.
- Financial assistance/incentives to attract health graduates to rural and remote areas.

Permanent Medicare Benefits Schedule Item Number for telehealth consultations assigned to allied health services

In correspondence to the Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care, ICPA (Aust) stressed that many geographically isolated children do not have access to face-to-face allied health

services. Rural and remote families face issues such as long travel distances, lengthy waitlists to access services in metropolitan areas, little or no access to services locally and financial hardship due to additional costs associated with accessing face-to-face services. Allied health services delivered by telehealth makes these services more accessible for all geographically isolated children.

In a response from the Minister, it was noted that the Government recognises that telehealth can significantly improve access to primary and allied health care services for those living in rural and remote locations. From 1 January 2022, many of the telehealth services implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic were made permanent on the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS).

From 1 March 2023, several improvements have been made to M10 (face-to-face) and M18 (telehealth equivalent) items of the MBS currently available for children with potential complex Neurodevelopmental Disorders (such as autism spectrum disorder) and other eligible disabilities.

Factsheets that describe the changes to MBS telehealth are available here:
<http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/>.

In July 2022, ICPA (Aust) contributed a submission to the Audit of the *Expansion of Telehealth Services*, by the Australian National Audit Office, providing feedback related specifically to the telehealth needs of rural and remote education and geographically isolated students. The submission can be found here: <https://icpa.com.au/au/2022-icpa-aust-submissions>.

Rebates provided by private health insurers

In correspondence sent following conference, ICPA (Aust) reiterated the importance of access to medical specialists and allied health professionals for rural and remote families with Private Healthcare Australia. We requested that private health insurers act quickly to ensure that all rural and remote children have access to affordable and rebated early intervention and medical services necessary to support their educational and developmental needs.

Federal Council were made aware that a number of health insurers have already introduced or are providing benefits for allied health services via telehealth. However, it is up to each individual health insurer to determine which services they cover and whether this cover extends to telehealth. We encourage members to investigate their options.

Accessibility to federally funded health clinics for all Australians

In ICPA (Aust) correspondence to the Minister Butler, it was emphasised that families are frequently turned away from the local federally funded rural and remote health clinics because they do not meet the criteria to access these services. There are no other local health clinics available for many of these families, therefore they are required to travel vast distances to access treatment for their children, requiring time away from school and impacting their learning and social ability.

In response, the Minister advised that grievances or complaints in relation to accessing health services should be addressed directly to the CEO or Board of the relevant organisation in the first instance. Complaints, concerns or grievances not adequately addressed by the CEO or Board, can be raised with the Office of the Health Ombudsman which is available in each State.

We acknowledge that this motion will once again be presented at the conference this year and would like to assure our members that we continue to advocate for them-and would appreciate any further case studies to strengthen our progress on the issue.

Financial assistance/incentives to attract health graduates to rural and remote areas

In further correspondence to the Minister for Health and Aged Care, ICPA (Aust) highlighted that rural and remote areas have been struggling with adequate and appropriate health services long

before the COVID-19 pandemic. Recruitment and retention of health staff in rural and remote Australia would be improved greatly by offering incentives to live and work in these areas.

In Minister Butler's response, ICPA (Aust) was advised that the Government delivers a number of programs and incentives to support the recruitment and retention of General Practitioners in regional, rural and remote locations and that the Government is investing \$146 million in new initiatives to provide regional and rural Australia with more doctors, more rural generalists and more team-based care, and to ensure full use of the existing health workforce. Furthermore, we were informed that in recognition of the challenges faced by many GPs, particularly in rural areas, the Government has committed \$35 million of this funding to expand the Innovative Models of Care Program from 1 January 2023.

On 9 February 2023 the Federal Government announced the passage of legislation that offers incentives for doctors and nurse practitioners who choose to live and work in rural and remote Australia will have their HELP debt wiped or reduced. The full media release can be read here: <https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/debt-wiped-country-practice>

It means that a doctor or nurse practitioner who lives and works in:

- A remote or very remote town for a time period of half the length of their course would have their entire HELP debt wiped.
- A large, medium or small rural town for a time period equal to the whole length of their course would have their entire HELP debt wiped.
- An eligible place for a period of time equivalent to half the time required is eligible to half the applicable debt reduction.

Australian-First National Guideline to help support Autistic Children

On the 16th February 2023 the Federal Government announced \$2 million in Commonwealth funding to the Autism Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) and commencement of work on the National Autism Strategy which will also support the implementation of this Guideline. The National Guideline will support the learning, participation and wellbeing of autistic children and their families. Media release can be found here: <https://ministers.dss.gov.au/media-releases/10306>

ICPA (Aust) has also collaborated with other services and organisations within the Allied Health field, such as National Rural Health Alliance, Sound Scouts, Disability Gateway and Minderoo Foundation (are you happy for me to name these Organisations?) Information has been reported in both Pedals and the Federal Focus (previously the Branch Bulletin).

The Australian Government has outlined provisions in its budget for 2022-23, that focus on improving health services in rural areas. These include increased funding for medical training and new university health departments, funding for the Little Wings service, and mobile clinics in Queensland that will provide diagnosis, treatment and follow up care. More information can be found here: <http://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/budget-2022-23-building-upon-the-stronger-rural-health-strategy>.

ICPA (Aust) continues to address these issues where appropriate and please feel free to contact us with any new issues as they arise. Once again Federal Council encourage members to approach us with new or updated case studies so it can provide greater impact to the issues our rural and remote children face.

TERTIARY REPORT

Kate Thompson

The disparity in tertiary participation, retention, attainment and opportunities for rural and remote students continues to be evident in the under-representation of this cohort in tertiary education compared to their metropolitan counterparts. The priority for the tertiary portfolio is to address the barriers to ensure equity for these rural and remote students.

Tertiary students and their families from geographically isolated locations face unique disadvantages and challenges to accessing a tertiary education. Factors such as a lack of social support, distance from tertiary education institutions, the high costs of relocation, tuition and ongoing living expenses all contribute to lower choice and opportunity for these students. These barriers increase the more remote a student resides from their chosen university.

Members continue to voice the greatest impediment to accessing a tertiary education is the high cost for students to relocate, often hundreds of kilometres away, to access their chosen pathway, along with living away from home. Adequate financial assistance is imperative to increase the engagement of rural and remote students at this level.

ICPA (Aust) seeks to ensure that students from rural and remote areas who have the ability, ambition, motivation and desire have access to tertiary education options which will enable them to pursue the career path of their choice.

TERTIARY MOTIONS

Motions presented at Federal Conferences continue to highlight the issues that the rural and remote tertiary cohort face when accessing higher education. In particular the high financial cost and the lack of adequate financial means to fund this access greatly impacts student's ability to attend university.

High up-front costs, along with on-going costs of relocating and setting up away from home (including rent, bond, electricity, phone and internet), securing accommodation, travel to access their place of study, amplified by the rising costs of basic living commodities, all impact on rural and remote student access. Some of these costs are borne not only in the first year of a student's course but are recurrent over the duration of their higher education. The full 2022 Motion update can be read here: www.icpa.com.au/au/resources/motion-updates.

The tertiary portfolio has addressed the 2022 motions along with the motions from previous years through correspondence and collaboration with relevant Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators, the Regional Education Commissioner, the Hon Fiona Nash, Government Departments including the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services and Services Australia, along with delegations and submissions.

TERTIARY ACCESS PAYMENT (TAP)

With the high cost of relocation, up-front set-up expenses and ongoing costs of living expenses being the greatest restraint on rural and remote students' ability to attend university, the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) has been welcomed to ease the burden of these costs.

The Tertiary Access Payment (TAP), which is in its third year, is a one-off, means-tested payment of up to \$5000 available for eligible school leavers from inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote areas who relocate more than 90 minutes by public transport from their family home to undertake a full-time, eligible higher level tertiary education course (Certificate IV or above) following year 12 or equivalent and whose parental income is below \$250 000. The Australian Government Department of Education has confirmed that the TAP is a permanent scheme and the program numbers are not capped.

Whilst implementation of the TAP has been a positive measure, ICPA (Aust) is working with the Government to ensure this payment meets the needs of all rural and remote tertiary students and the guidelines used reflect our longstanding advocacy for a Tertiary Access Allowance. Federal Council continues to recommend changes to the program so all rural and remote students who have to relocate for study/training are afforded equity of access to a tertiary education. ICPA (Aust)'s recommendations include:

- Aligning the TAP with the Relocation Scholarship in terms of payment rates, an annual payment to recognise that the costs are ongoing throughout a student's course.
- The availability of the TAP for all rural and remote students on commencement of university including after a gap year.
- Removal of the \$250,000 parental limit as many parents are already facing huge costs as they support other tertiary students already at university and younger siblings at boarding school.
- The inclusion of rural and remote Australian Apprentices who must relocate from their home to access their apprenticeship.

In response to the TAP queries identified in the 2022 motions and other queries raised directly with Federal Council, the following update has been received from the Department of Education.

TAP Eligibility

- The latest *Tertiary Access Payment Program Guidelines 2022-2024* (Program Guidelines) clarify that a student may commence studies at any point in the year following completion of Year 12 or equivalent. The Department of Education website has been updated to reflect the scenario that if a student who undertakes eligible tertiary study in Semester 2 would qualify for the TAP (subject to meeting all other criteria).
- In relation to the reference to the "academic year" the criteria on the website refers to **Study a course with a minimum duration of one academic year**. It has been confirmed that 'academic year' effectively means 12 months and is irrespective of when in the year a student starts. The above is now clearly visible on the website as well as in the Program Guidelines here: www.education.gov.au/tap/resources/tertiary-access-payment-program-guidelines-20222024. ICPA (Aust) has been advised that the Department will ensure that all universities are using the updated language as per the current Guidelines in their promotion of the TAP.
- **Commencement of a TAP application:** The TAP Program Guidelines state individuals can apply for TAP in the calendar year immediately following completion of year 12 (the year their TAP qualifying tertiary study commences) and that they must submit their application between 1 January and 31 December (inclusive) of that year.
- **Commencement of the TAP Payment:** The Program Guidelines stipulate that the first instalment of the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) will be paid to eligible applicants 42 days after their course has commenced and they have confirmed their enrolment. The second instalment of TAP will be paid 42 days after 1 August – or after 1 February the following year for those who commence their course in the second half of the calendar year.
- **Proof of Identity for TAP applicants:** TAP claimants can confirm their identity online through strong digital identity mechanisms, such as the myGovID app www.mygovid.gov.au. However, video chat is not available for identity verification for TAP as it is for Youth Allowance. Once a TAP claimant has proved their identity using the app, they can then apply for TAP using their Centrelink online account. If a TAP claimant has previously had their identity confirmed for another payment, they will not need to do this again.

ICPA (Aust) recommends changes to the TAP to address the continued disparity in the level of financial support provided to assist with relocation costs for rural and remote students who have qualified for independent Youth Allowance or are ineligible for Youth Allowance compared to dependent Youth Allowance including the TAP should:

- Be an annual payment for the duration of the student's full-time course.
- Be available to all rural and remote students including those who have taken a gap year.
- Be equivalent to the Relocation Scholarship (2023 - \$5,080 in the first year, \$2,541 in the second and third years and \$1,269 in the fourth or subsequent years).
- Not be classed as income and hence not jeopardise the student's eligibility for existing support payments such as Youth Allowance.
- Be a non means-tested allowance.

REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

In correspondence to the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP, ICPA (Aust) applauded the policy to deliver up to 20,000 new university places and the prioritisation of places to universities that offer opportunities to under-represented groups including students in regional and remote areas, those who are the first in their family to study at university and First Nation Australians. Additionally, ICPA (Aust) requested that regional universities were prioritised to enable rural and remote students' greater choice to study within the regions, remain connected to their communities, help to improve the academic outcomes for this cohort and improve accessibility and affordability. In response Minister Clare reassured ICPA (Aust) of the availability of the Regional University Centres (RUCs).

REGIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTRES (RUC)

RUCs provide physical, campus-like access in rural, regional and remote areas which support students who are studying online at any Australian university allowing those students who wish to remain within their communities the opportunity to do so. RUCs offer infrastructure (study spaces, computers, high speed internet and video-conferencing), administration and academic support services and student support services (pastoral care, advice) resulting in an affordable alternative choice.

It must be remembered that most students who live in rural and remote areas would still be required to relocate considerable distances even if they chose to study at a RUC or Regional University.

RURAL AND REGIONAL ENTERPRISE SCHOLARSHIPS (RRES) PROGRAM

The concerns of late RRES payments affecting students was passed on to the Australian Government Department of Education who in turn raised the issue with Queensland Tertiary Admission Centre (QTAC) who administered the RRES. The Department of Education also shared this concern with other relevant teams, including the team responsible for administering the TAP, to ensure awareness of the importance of timely payments for students is considered in future programs, particularly those that are administered by external agencies.

ICPA (Aust) has been grateful for the RRES program that has supported rural and remote undergraduate, postgraduate and higher-level vocational education and training (VET) students with the costs of studying at university or VET institution. Pleasingly on the 22 May 2023, the Assistant Minister for Education, Senator Anthony Chisholm announced the extension of the RRES program with an additional 360 scholarships available in 2023. ICPA (Aust) has been recommending the continuation of the RRES program or a similar program.

LIQUID ASSETS WAITING PERIOD

Members have been asking for the removal of the Liquid Assets Waiting Period for rural and remote students who have fulfilled the self-supporting criteria for Youth Allowance as an independent and have to relocate to access tertiary education, to recognise the high cost of relocation, set-up, living and educational expenses these students face. In order to commence receiving Youth Allowance

without fulfilling the liquid assets waiting period, prospective single students can only have \$5,500 in their bank account which is an unrealistic amount to cover the high costs they face. These students are penalised for having saved these funds when the Liquid Assets Waiting Period is applied.

In the response from the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, it was noted that a tertiary student's liquid assets may be reduced by allowable deductions either incurred or likely to be incurred relating to their course including up-front course fees, HECS-HELP payments, student union fees, textbook costs and tools or IT equipment required to undertake the course.

RENT ASSISTANCE

For many years members have been requesting that Rent Assistance be substantially increased for rural and remote students receiving Youth Allowance to more closely reflect the real cost of living and the actual rental market. The rental market is extremely competitive and accommodation costs are rising exponentially. Rent Assistance has not kept pace with the increases in rental costs.

Pleasingly the 2023 Federal Budget included the announcement of:

- An increase of \$40 per fortnight to income support payments (Austudy and Youth Allowance).
- An increase of 15 percent to the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

LONG STANDING TERTIARY ISSUES

Federal Council continues to advocate for the implementation of changes to address the issues that have been on the Tertiary agenda for many years including:

- The significant increase in the dependent Youth Allowance Parental Income limit.
- The removal of the independent Youth Allowance Parental Income limit.
- Changes to the independent Youth Allowances eligibility criteria to include all rural and remote students who must relocate to study be considered independent for Youth Allowance purposes.
- The expansion of the Relocation Scholarship.

DELEGATIONS AND MEETINGS

The Tertiary Portfolio has been involved in regular quarterly meetings with the Department of Social Services and Services Australia, advocating on behalf of our tertiary students. This forum has been a productive opportunity to timely address issues brought to Federal Council particularly around Youth Allowance and Tertiary Access Payment applications.

REGIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSIONER

ICPA (Aust) continues to work with the Regional Education Commissioner, Hon Fiona Nash on the implementation of the National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy (Naphthine Review) recommendations to achieve positive outcomes for rural and remote tertiary students. While some have occurred the implementation of all recommendations from the Naphthine Review would see important measures introduced for rural and remote students including:

- A review of the current Government income support policies and arrangements for students that relocate from the family home to access further study or training.
- Improvement of income support information.
- The provision of greater flexibility in pathways to qualify for independent Youth Allowance.
- Improvements to the quality and range of student support services including pastoral care, mentoring programs and academic support.
- Improvement and support of high quality career information and advice.
- The improved availability of and information on accommodation support for relocating tertiary and training students.
- Improved access to affordable, reliable, high speed internet services.
- Improved access to high quality VET programs in rural and remote Australia.
- Support for tertiary providers to implement tailored initiatives experiencing rural hardship.

YOUTH ALLOWANCE OVERVIEW 2023 DOCUMENT

The Tertiary Portfolio has updated the Youth Allowance Overview in consultation with the Department of Social Services and Services Australia as a guide to Youth Allowance eligibility and application. This document summarises the lengthy Youth Allowance website information for rural and remote students planning to study full-time and intending to apply for Youth Allowance and is available in the January 2023 Pedals and on the ICPA (Aust) website. For further information, advice, clarification or assistance, please phone **132490** (dedicated Youth Allowance phone number) or visit: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/youth-allowance.

SUBMISSIONS

In the last 12 months, Federal Council has contributed to three tertiary-related submissions highlighting the key issues and challenges concerning access to tertiary education for rural and remote students. Submissions can be viewed here: <https://icpa.com.au/au/2023-icpa-aust-submissions>.

Review of Australia's Higher Education System

ICPA (Aust) contributed to the Review of Australia's Higher Education System highlighting the key issues and challenges raised by ICPA members concerning equity of access to tertiary and training education for rural and remote students. This submission allowed ICPA (Aust) to incorporate all the issues from motions, some that have been on the agenda and in policy for many years.

ICPA (Aust) believes that the following issues must be addressed to ensure equity of access to a tertiary education, improve the educational outcomes and participation rates of rural and remote students and to ensure rural and remote tertiary students have access to a high-quality tertiary education commensurate to their needs and aspirations.

ICPA (Aust)'s Recommendations:

- Students isolated from tertiary education due to location, must be recognised as a separate disadvantage group when being assessed for support mechanisms such as Youth Allowance to address the distinctly unique circumstances and requirements of rural and remote students.
- Enhancements to the Tertiary Access Payment to ensure it meets the needs of all rural and remote students who need to relocate to access tertiary study.
- Support payments and adjunct payments must be appropriate and commensurate with the costs incurred by rural and remote students who have to live away from the family home to access a tertiary education.
- The current parental income limit for dependent Youth Allowance be significantly increased to be more reflective of the actual cost of supporting a dependent student at a tertiary level.
- The Parental Income Test be removed from the eligibility criteria for rural and remote students qualifying for Youth Allowance as an independent under the workforce participation criteria.
- Changes be made to the Youth Allowance qualifying criteria for rural and remote students who must relocate to study so that, on course commencement, they are considered independent for Youth Allowance purposes (where students are ineligible for dependent Youth Allowance).
- The Liquid Assets Waiting Period be removed for rural and remote students who have fulfilled the self-supporting criteria for Youth Allowance as an independent and who have to relocate from the family home to access tertiary education.
- The criteria for the Relocation Scholarship be extended for those rural and remote students who must relocate and live away from home to access a tertiary education and not be contingent on the receipt of dependent Youth Allowance.
- Rent Assistance be substantially increased for rural and remote students receiving Youth Allowance to more closely reflect the real cost of living for this cohort and the actual rental market.

- Additional assistance to supplement student travel costs and accommodation to attend course practicums.
- The continuation of Rural and Remote Enterprise Scholarships or implementation of a similar program to improve access to educational opportunities for rural and remote students.
- Information on tertiary courses, admission requirements and processes must be readily available, accessible and comprehensive.
- Regional University Centres continue to be available for rural and remote students as an option for access to tertiary education.
- Online learning continues to remain an option for rural and remote students and internet services are reliable, effective and efficient to support this mode of delivery.
- All the recommendations from the Napthine Review are implemented.
- Apprentices and VET students – see Training Report 2023 for these recommendations.

Developments In Higher Education Admission Practices

ICPA (Aust) contributed to the discussion paper *Developments in Higher Education Admission Practices* and highlight the key issues and challenges for rural and remote students navigating the tertiary admissions process.

ICPA (Aust)'s Recommendations:

- The opportunity to obtain admission information in various mediums, including phone, internet and face to face including through school teachers and/or career advisers.
- Access to comprehensive, readily accessible, up-to-date information and support for senior secondary career pathways planning.
- Higher education institutions must be transparent in their admission processes and offers including course availability, delivery options, entry requirements, alternative entrance options, bonus points allocation and eligibility, application processes, course costs, accommodation options, campus facilities and support available.
- Staff delivering career's advice at schools are well-versed and knowledgeable in university admission information and processes and have access to resources and training to be able to provide adequate advice to students.
- The availability of support for students in years 11 and 12 via teachers, careers advisers and schools, online assistance and a dedicated call centre to assist rural and remote students in understanding the influencing factors regarding the process of acceptance into particular tertiary institutions.
- The range of non-ATAR related admission options including At-school offers, school recommendations and scholarship entry is transparent and readily available.
- Rural and remote students and their families are well-informed of options available to them, such as specific allowances and remoteness considerations.
- A national approach to managing applications across borders.

Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper

ICPA (Aust) contributed to the *Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper* and to highlight key issues specifically related to initial teacher education, teachers and teaching in rural and remote Australia. Teachers must be well-prepared for the unique circumstances surrounding these learning contexts. Education providers must ensure the initial teacher education content delivered, both theoretical and practical, is contextually appropriate.

ICPA (Aust)'s Recommendations:

Education providers who offer initial teacher education courses should implement a more extensive course structure to include:

- A major in Rural and Remote Education to prepare students and graduates for the complexities, challenges and uniqueness of teaching in rural and remote schools including the distance education environment.
- Modules on teaching students with specific learning needs to prepare students and graduates to recognise and facilitate early recognition, identification and assessment learning difficulties and assist, manage and meet the needs and abilities of children with specific needs and learning difficulties and assist and support distance education Home Tutors.

In conclusion, ICPA (Aust) is very appreciative of the Federal Government's continued commitment and prioritisation of tertiary education and the measures already in place which have benefited rural and remote students. Federal Council will continue to progress and raise the profile of our members' issues at every opportunity and advocate for the implementation of changes/measures to ensure rural and remote students have the opportunity to access, participate and complete a tertiary education of their choice commensurate with their aspirations and career plans.

I would like to thank my fellow Tertiary Portfolio members Anna McCorkle, Julia Broad, Naomi Obst, Alana Moller, Federal Council and the State Tertiary Portfolios for their invaluable support, guidance, and knowledge. It has been a pleasure to again lead the Tertiary Portfolio and I look forward to further developments in the tertiary sphere for the benefit of rural and remote tertiary students.

TRAINING REPORT

Anna McCorkle

"When we talk about preparing people for the workforce, it is often framed as being a choice between vocational education, going to university, or on-the-job training. The problem with that paradigm is that the speed of technological advances means future workers will probably need to do all three, and not just once. They will need to constantly move in and out of education throughout their careers to update their knowledge and skills. A new approach to vocational and higher education is essential to prepare the workforce of the future." Peter Shergold AC, *Financial Review* April 2, 2023

The 2022-23 Federal Council Training Portfolio year has been focused on the current and previous motions, which continue to highlight the difficulties rural and remote students face when choosing to continue with their post school education as apprentices and trainees. The gaining of skills for employment and to be productive positive members of our communities requires people to have access to education and training, not just employment.

Certification was once a new concept, yet now the attainment of these certifications and subsequent qualifications is the background behind a shift in the forthcoming "post compulsory education" pathway for many Australians and is a requirement for many occupations, jobs and even tasks that we all undertake every day in our business, working and personal lives. Rural and remote students accessing a training course face challenges common to their urban counterparts and many also need to relocate or travel vast distances with the associated high costs.

2022 Federal Conference Motion

Delegates at the 2022 Federal Conference in Perth carried a training motion requesting the inclusion of Regional TAFE's in the proposed improvements as mentioned in the 'Your Education Policy - TAFE Technology Fund'.

Following conference, correspondence was sent to the Minister for Skills and Training the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP, and Regional Education Commissioner the Hon Fiona Nash along with other

relevant Ministers, Senators and Members of Parliament seeking assurance that this commitment to provide high quality information technology (IT) facilities, workshops, laboratories and telehealth simulators extends to regional, rural and remote communities and the TAFE institutions which provide services in these locations, allowing access for rural and remote students closer to home. Our correspondence reiterated that rural and remote apprentices and Vocational Education and Training (VET) students are often under-represented in post-compulsory education and experience significant disadvantage in their efforts to pursue their chosen courses. Further, we recommended that any measures aimed at improving quality of and access to TAFE facilities address these barriers.

In a response received from the Minister, it was confirmed that the \$50 million TAFE Technology Fund would include investments across regional Australia and in addition funding for projects under the balance of the fund will be able to be applied for, including in rural and remote locations.

View the TAFE Technology Fund website here:

<https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/tafe-technology-fund>

Delegations and Meetings

The October 2022 and May 2023 delegations to Canberra enabled Federal Council to meet with Ministers, Senators and Members of Parliament to raise members' issues such as the Commonwealth Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA) and the inclusion of apprentice and trainees in the established Tertiary Access Payment (TAP). Federal Council has been involved in regular meetings with the Department of Social Services and Services Australia. Consultations were held with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to support ICPA (Aust)'s submission to the Australian Apprenticeship Services and Supports Discussion Paper.

Submission - Australian Apprenticeship Support Services and Supports Discussion Paper

Apprenticeships and available supports remain a key focus area for the Government on the back of the Jobs and Skills summit held in September 2022. ICPA (Aust) contributed a submission to the non-financial Apprenticeship Supports review, addressing the services of the federally funded Australia Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) providers. Apprenticeships cannot commence without the involvement of an AASN. Across Australia there are seven Apprenticeship Network Provider organisations, contracted by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations with 130 fulltime sites and approximately 500 mobile field officers.

In the submission and consultations, ICPA (Aust) reiterated members' concerns, including the need for more support from the AASNs in relation to rural and remote apprentices and trainees. Below is an outline of the feedback provided.

Accessing Australia Apprenticeships in rural and remote locations

- The need for increased Careers Education regarding apprenticeships in schools.
- The allocation of an AASN provider staff member for rural and remote Australian Apprentices to develop a rapport and be their first point of contact to provide timely and regular monitoring of wellbeing, progress, identification of anomalies in work environment and answer any questions from the apprentice.

Flexibility in Training and Assessing - Encouraging and Supporting Rural and Remote Apprentices

- The high upfront and ongoing costs for rural and remote students who must relocate to access their apprenticeship contributes to low completion rates for this cohort. ICPA (Aust) appreciates that the financial aspects are being reviewed in late 2023 and looks forward to expanding on these issues, which include the need for increases to the Commonwealth Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA), inclusion of apprentices and trainees in the Tertiary

Access Payment (TAP) along with Youth Allowance adjunct payments including the Relocation Scholarship.

- Increased supports for Australian Apprentices through training and upskilling of AASN provider staff on the unique needs of rural and remote apprentices who have relocated from home to access their apprenticeship including the knowledge and experience of the non-financial support these apprentices need to succeed.

Australian Apprenticeship Support Network and its Providers

- There is a need to have appropriate systems in place to periodically and adequately review support services to ensure performance indicators are met along with the AASN Code of Conduct and Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System Guidelines.

In April the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations released the 'Future Directions Australian Apprenticeships Support Services Consultation Paper'. ICPA (Aust) identified issues addressed by several stakeholders including employers, unions, state and territory government representatives, AASN providers, Government Training Organisations (GTOs) and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) who contributed to the review process. Following are some of the key points raised.

- **Apprentices who experience additional barriers** need more support, and often more specialised support, to succeed.
- **Apprentices from regional, rural and remote areas**
 - Apprentices from regional, rural and remote areas can face additional geographic barriers when it comes to sourcing an apprenticeship pathway. When they do commence an apprenticeship, it is often difficult to access and stay motivated to complete the off-the-job training component due to the financial and social costs of travelling or living away from home.
 - It was further noted that struggles with living expenses, including high fuel and associated travel costs to travel extensive distances between home, workplaces, and/or off-the-job training, can present increased logistical complexity for apprentices from regional, rural and remote areas.
 - Concerns were also raised about the timeliness of service provision for rural and remote apprentices. Apprentices from rural and remote areas, and their employers, could benefit from being able to access virtual or self-service options, including virtual sign ups.
- **Proactive engagement by apprenticeship support services** can support better awareness of the supports available to employers and apprentices.
 - Consultation identified a consistently low level of awareness and understanding amongst apprentices and stakeholders of the role of the AASN providers.
 - It was highlighted that available support services need to be more visible for regional and remote apprentices who face additional challenges either living away from home or travelling to attend the off-the-job component of their training.
- **Better connected services and information sharing can identify issues as they emerge**
 - Acknowledgement was made of the need for greater capacity and capability for information sharing to ensure better targeting of supports for apprentices at risk of disengaging to ensure timely assistance when issues emerge with an apprentice's training, such as difficulty completing the off-the-job training component. A 'one-stop-

shop' approach could be beneficial to allow access to the full range of available supports.

- **Proposed future directions**

- All apprentices are set up to succeed and know where to get help when they need it.
- Apprentices who face additional barriers to completion have access to quality targeted mentoring and personalised assistance.
- The proposed model for apprenticeship support services and non-financial supports will put the apprentice at the centre and ensure the system continues to deliver skilled workers that industry needs. The future model is intended to be delivered on a regional basis and provide choice for employers and apprentices to select between at least two providers in each State except in the Northern Territory, where an expanded range of services will be procured separately on behalf of the Commonwealth and NT Government.

ICPA (Aust) provided feedback and recommendations on the proposed model outlined in the Future Directions paper to further strengthen the proposed model to grow apprenticeship engagement and completion in rural and remote locations. During a meeting with other parent body stakeholders in May, issues raised included:

- Training of AASN staff in financial and non-financial supports is essential for all staff supporting rural and remote students at all stages in their apprenticeship, as is the knowledge of the barriers that are often experienced by rural and remote apprentices who have to relocate for both on and off the job components of an apprenticeship.
- The need for a 'one stop shop' service available online and face to face, allowing the employer, apprentice and/or RTO to access services specifically trained to support geographically isolated apprenticeship opportunities.
- The need for AASN staff to be contactable to ensure timely assistance for the apprentice and employer.
- Regularity of reviews and 'checks and balances' of all parties involved the process.
- The need for increased knowledge by the AASN, RTO and employer of the geographic isolation circumstances of a rural and remote apprentice/trainee who has relocated to take up both the on and off-the-job training.

Once the final report is received, Federal Council will notify members of the new AASN structure and supports. ICPA (Aust) is awaiting the release of the terms of reference for the review of the current financial supports available for Apprentices and Trainees, some of which are outlined below.

Support for Australian Apprentices

Australian Apprentices may be eligible for financial and non-financial support from the Australian Government. To claim and receive payments under the Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System they must meet all primary eligibility requirements.

For more information on the financial incentives and payments and eligibility criteria for Australian Apprenticeships please refer to:

- Australian Apprenticeships Financial Support page
<https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/financial-programs>
<https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/aus-apprenticeships-incentives> .
- Apprenticeships Incentives System Guidelines <https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-support-individuals/resources/australian-apprenticeships-incentive-system-guidelines>
- Australian Apprenticeship Support Network provider
<https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/search-aasn>

Payments available for eligible apprentices include:

- Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA)
- Youth Allowance
- Australian Apprentice Training Support Payment
- New Energy Apprenticeships Program
- Assistance for Australian Apprentices with disability
- Support for Women in Trades
- Trade Support Loans

2022 National Skills Agreement

In August 2022 the National Skills Agreement was agreed to by Australia's Skills Ministers and endorsed by the National Cabinet. Its vision "Australia needs a VET sector that provides high-quality, responsive and accessible education and training to boost productivity and support Australians to obtain the skills they need to participate and prosper in the modern economy. Recognising the key role the VET sector plays in providing strong economic and social outcomes for Australians, all governments commit to working in partnership to negotiate a National Skills Agreement." Within the six principals rural and remote students are assured that they "have access to the education, training and support needed to obtain well-paid, secure jobs." For more information view here: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/national-skills-agreement-vision-and-principles>

2023-24 Budget Allocations

Skills and workforce development: In 2023–24, the Australian Government will provide funding of \$1.9 billion to support state skills and workforce development services, including \$1.7 billion through the National Skills and Workforce Development Specific Purpose Payment (SPP), and \$230.2 million through National Partnership payments. These include 12-Month Skills Agreement (including TAFE Technology Fund), Fee-free TAFE from 2024, JobTrainer Fund, Resources Centre of Excellence and further allocation of funds to the States for vocational education and training will be subject to the successful conclusion of negotiations for a new 5-year National Skills Agreement, which would commence on 1 January 2024.

To conclude I would like to thank everyone on Federal Council for the encouragement and guidance that is always available. The Training Portfolio continues to work closely with the Tertiary Portfolio, as many of the post school pathways issues overlap. Thank you, particularly to those within the Training and Tertiary Portfolios Kate Thompson, Alana Moller, Kim Hughes, Miffy Waugh, Julia Broad and Naomi Obst, and to the extended Federal Council Team who are always on hand.

SPEECHES

President's Welcome 2023

Alana Moller

Good morning, on behalf of Federal Council, it is with great pleasure I welcome delegates, observers and guests to our Federal Conference. A very special mention and warm welcome to Hon Vicki O'Halloran AO CVO, Northern Territory ICPA Patron our two Federal Life Members joining us this year Mr Jack Beach and Mrs Sue Shotton, as well as Regional Education Commissioner Hon Fiona Nash, who will be speaking shortly. I also take the opportunity to acknowledge the attendance today of Senator for Queensland Susan McDonald and Senator for New South Wales Perin Davey and Senator for the Northern Territory Jacinta Price and thank them for their support of ICPA.

Before I begin, may I show my respect, and acknowledge the Larrakia people, the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet and also pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

For those who have not met me, my name is Alana Moller. I am the current Federal President of ICPA and I feel honoured to be chairing the 2023 Isolated Children's Parents' Association Federal Conference over the next two days. It is a pleasure to be here with you all in the north of our country, so warmly welcomed last night by the Northern Territory Minister for Education Eva Lawler, along with our Northern Territory ICPA members.

The Conference theme this year "Unique Land, Unique Learning" embodies the message which Federal Council endeavours to portray in our advocacy across all portfolio areas, that our children are unique, living and learning in unique situations and have unique needs which must always be considered and adequately addressed. Of course that is exactly why we are all here and I am absolutely delighted to have you all joining us to continue our efforts to achieve educational equity for our children and relish the opportunity to interact, collaborate and connect with you all.

It is pleasing to see many of our Branches participating in the Conference. To all of our delegates, in particular those of you who are attending conference for the first time, thank you for attending on behalf of your branch. Over the next two days, please take the opportunity to engage in robust, passionate, and informed conversations and debate. Conference delegates, as you consider the discussion and debate on the motions presented over the next two days, be mindful that as you are voting, you are setting ICPA Australia's policy. The decisions made here by you as branch and state representatives, will determine how Federal Council will go forward with our advocacy for the next 12 months. To all ICPA members present, the conference floor this is your opportunity to share your stories of the barriers faced by rural and remote students across the country. If you have a story to tell and you don't have an opportunity to speak on a motion, your information is still very important to us, so please feel free to reach out to Federal Council at any time to share your experiences with us.

We know some of you may be anxious about making a mistake and the reason we know this is because we share those feelings and I cannot promise I will not make mistakes over the coming days. However, we are all here to support each other to get through anything that comes and I appreciate and thank you in advance for your understanding and support as I chair the conference over the next two days.

Welcome and thank you to all State Council representatives who have been able to attend the Conference, we look forward to hearing updates from all states over the next two days.

To our guests, thank you for taking the time to be with us and please feel free to comment on motions as your knowledge and expertise can often help us to clarify our position on issues. We are also pleased to have a number of government and organisation representatives attending conference.

You'll have noticed, on the conference agenda that many reports will be presented to conference. Nevertheless, due to time constraints, several of the reports you'll hear around issues that we deal with have been condensed. I encourage you to read the full reports in your conference booklets. All reports will also be added to the ICPA Australia website.

We have media representation filming and interviewing as well as Federal Council representatives recording this event. If you do not wish to be photographed, please advise our photographer, Hannah Calcino and media representatives.

On the conference floor today, we have 12 exceptional Federal Councillors – ladies give a wave as I introduce you - joining me on the stage are:

our Federal Vice President Julia Broad and
Federal Secretary Kim Hughes

We also have:

Immediate Past President Wendy Hick
Federal Assistant Secretary Kate Thompson
Federal Treasurer Nikki Mahony
Federal Publicity Officer Ali Allison
Councillor Naomi Obst
Councillor Wendy Henning
Councillor Anna McCorkle
Councillor Laura Stalley
Councillor Miffy Waugh

Please, do not hesitate to approach federal councillors on any issues you would like clarified or have an interest in. Federal Councillors live and breathe ICPA and are an excellent source of knowledge. If they cannot assist, they will direct you to who can.

While we cannot promise that all will run seamlessly and there will not be obstacles throughout the next two days, please know that we will make every effort to ensure the conference runs as smoothly as possible. There may be times when changes need to be made to the program. To confirm, the program in the conference booklet is not correct, please look at the program on the conference website or a new version has also been placed on each table. As I mentioned earlier, I am sure to make mistakes, I am definitely not an expert at this and there may be times where I may need to call on the wider experience that we have present in the room for guidance. I ask for your patience and understanding should this occur. If we do happen to make a mistake in procedure or something else, please raise a "Point of Order" or let us know, so that we are aware of the error and can take steps to rectify it. We have much to work through over the next two days, but we also want to ensure that we proceed in the correct manner.

Our hosts, Northern Territory Council and the convening committee have been looking forward to this day for quite some time. Our congratulations to all involved in bringing the conference to fruition. A very special mention to the sponsors who have contributed to make this happen, I know there are representatives from some sponsors attending Conference and I welcome you and thank you for your support.

All that is left to do now is to wish you all an enjoyable and exciting conference; one that will challenge, motivate and inspire you to seize the opportunity to continue the legacy of ICPA to achieve

equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for our geographically isolated children as they learn across this unique land.

I now invite Conference Convenor, Suzanne Wilson to give an overview of conference arrangements and housekeeping.

Opening Speaker

Hon Fiona Nash
Regional Education Commissioner

Thank you, Alana, for that very kind introduction. I firstly acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Larrakia people and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to any First Nations people in the room.

Well good morning. It is an absolute pleasure to be here. Alana, can I firstly acknowledge you and your executive team and thank you very much for inviting me to be here with you today. It really is a great thrill. I also want to acknowledge immediate past president Wendy Hick and acknowledge all the work that you have done, knowing that you are just about to step out of this position. Can I also acknowledge Senator Perin Davey and Senator Susan McDonald and I know Senator Price is joining also which will be wonderful to see her and great to see you both here this morning.

One of the things that I am delighted about today is to actually be here in person. I was invited last year but had to come in remotely. I had a very uncooperative fractured knee, that did not want to travel to WA at the time, so it is really lovely to be here with you today.

I want to acknowledge the former Coalition Government for creating the Regional Education Commissioner role. It came about as a result of a recommendation from a review that was done into Higher Education by Denis Napthine and his team. It was the vision from the former government that saw this role come into place and for the first time have a national focus on regional education from one side of the country to the other. I also want to acknowledge the Minister for Education, Jason Clare and the Assistant Minister Anthony Chisholm for their genuine commitment to improving outcomes in regional education and I know the Assistant Minister is going to be here with you tomorrow and he is certainly looking forward to doing that.

My role now that I have been in there for about 18 months, is something that I see as a real privilege, but also a real responsibility. When I came into the role 18 months ago it was a brand-new role so we were having to create what the role would do, how it would perform and what it would achieve. So I have a very small secretariat team in the Department of Education in Canberra and a wonderful EA who I am always very proud to say works remotely from regional Australia down on the south coast and I am actually half an hour west of Dubbo in northern New South Wales. It really works and it is a testament to show what can be done in regional areas. But my role is very much about working with the education sector, working with industry, working with communities to identify what the challenges are. That is pretty easy as I think we know what all those are and all of you sitting in this room certainly do, but even more importantly, what the solutions are, and how those solutions can be implemented. So effectively, my role is to give advice to government on how those solutions can be implemented, and what is going to improve all of those circumstances for our rural, regional and remote people from one side of the country to the other.

Last December Minister Clare also appointed me to the Universities Accord Review of Higher Education panel which is happening this year for 12 months and I will speak a little bit about that later. He has also appointed me to the Schools Review Reference Group, that is happening this year

as well and they are due to report a little later in the year. The reason I am mentioning those things, I think it is so important that the regional voice is in there when things are being determined and deliberated and that it has really got a strong role. So my representative role is not about me and what I think, it is about you and what you think and about what other organisations and what other people and what other communities are thinking right across the country. My job is to be your champion. Every single day I try to do that to my best ability and please take advantage of it. I will continue to do everything I can, to make sure that I represent those people out in the regions as well as I possibly can, when it comes to improving regional education.

When we look at our rural and remote circumstances, it is so important that we recognise literally that, the importance of rural and remote Australia. I have not come across the government yet that has said “We want everybody to move to the city, we want everybody in metropolitan areas and we really do not care very much about rural and remote Australia.”

So given that they know how important rural and remote Australia is to the fabric of the nation, to the social fabric of the nation, to being the engine room of the nation. I think it is about 75 billion that agriculture, forestry and fisheries bring in exports and around 450 billion mining resources and energy does and that is just a couple of things that are happening out in our rural and remote areas. It is really important that governments accept responsibility for supporting rural and remote people and communities when there is not a market that will deliver the services and things that they need. It is about equity and we were talking about this this morning down at the table. It is all about equity, it does not mean having things exactly the same absolutely everywhere, but it means equity of access to the things that are needed for all of the people in this room and everyone you represent and everybody out in those communities. It is vitally important that government accepts that responsibility because we cannot expect you to do all that you do and drive the nation without government saying we are going to support you to do that.

We need to look into the future and how things are going to change and moving to renewable energy and all of the opportunities that come with so many things with change and government needs to support our communities to make sure we do that. One of the things I talk about constantly is access, aspiration and attainment. When I look at our young people across rural and remote Australia, we want them to have the drive and the belief that they can do anything that they want and that anything is possible. And as I often say a lot of our young people have the aspiration, they think I would love to be an engineer, I really want to be an accountant, or I really want to be an ag scientist, but they do not have the self-belief. They think I cannot do that, I have never been to university, I would not know how to be away from home, so we need to do a lot more thinking how from a very young age we can instil that absolute self-belief in young people to know that they can do anything. Then we have got to give them access and we all know about the tyranny of distance, and the cost of relocation and all of those sorts of things and we look also at attainment and the support that our young people have when they leave home whether they go off to vocational education and training or whether they go off to Uni. But the support that they need is so very different to a young person who might be living at home in a metropolitan area with their family every day, and it is just so different. It is such a disconnect and incredibly important that they have the support in the learning environment that they need when they do leave home.

The Government has a number of reviews underway at the moment, Early Childhood reviews, the Schools Review and the Universities Accord Review into Higher Education. The thing that strikes me about that, is the opportunity when it comes to education to look at that education journey right through from early childhood, for our little, tiny wee children right through schools, to vocational education and training or University if that is where they choose to go. It is a really important opportunity that when we have all those three reviews underway, that we look at them together, that we look at them as a whole because the impacts of early childhood, into schools for children of

that age and then again at schools through to University, it all links together. I think for too long decision-makers have been looking at those things in silos and not looking at what does that child need? How is that child going to need to be supported, to be given opportunity right through from that early childhood, schools and right through to higher education. It is very important to not just think about policies but actually think about the children that are going through and what they need and how they can be encouraged and supported to be the best they can possibly be. I often say my vision in this role is for all students no matter how old they are, have access to the educational opportunities that they need and that they want to reach their full potential and so much of what you do every day is doing exactly that and I really congratulate you for it.

In early childhood where there is a couple of reviews going at the moment the ACCC inquiry and also the Productivity Commission enquiry into childhood education and care. One of the great things about this role is, I am being asked and I do have the ability to contribute to the many reviews and enquiries are going on around education broader even than the ones I mentioned earlier and being able to get that regional voice into the thinking around those reviews, and on what they are hearing, and what they are listening to. One of the things I have been putting forward which will not surprise you, is the extending the AIC distance education allowance to 3 and 4 year-olds. It is so important that this happens because when we look at what so many people are doing in their homes and when we are looking at the work that they are doing, that preschool work, when they have no option. And that is the kicker, there is no option! They are not living in the middle of Sydney, there is not seven options down the road to do it. So that will be one thing I will certainly be continuing to push for you, and I think the decision-makers need to really recognise with early childhood and how important that is, but it is not a one size fits all policy. You cannot put policy across the nation with early childhood and say that will work because it just does not, cities are different to the regions and even within regional and rural and remote, they are all very different. Decision makers need to make sure that they have got the flexibility in their thinking that we have the right outcomes when we are looking at non-metropolitan areas. One of the things that I have been talking about is that, with those inquiries and other decision-makers, looking at flexibility of provision. I know that one of the motions put forward about having to two family day-care educators to be able to have 14 children rather than seven. Now that just seems to be a practical and sensible thing to do. People that are making the decisions would not even have thought about the different circumstances where you would actually need to use the one set of facilities and you have not got the option like you have in the city area with two particular facilities might be really close together, not so simple when you get to rural and remote. So it is those sort of things that you are bringing up through what you are doing here, that are really important that will get fed through and looking at how to get mobile more flexibly, more expansion of playgroups, more expansion of mobile services, how we look at blending in potentially more of a virtual opportunity where we have not got the educators out there at the level of qualification required in the early childhood childcare and how we look at doing that. There is a range of options really that in my view need to be looked at and so much of it is about workforce with childcare. Such a significant barrier when we are looking at getting people back into the workforce and we know we have got regional workforce shortages everywhere at the moment and also about attracting people. I was talking to a local council in western Queensland not very long ago at all, they had this professional who wanted to come into the town and take up this role. Absolutely fantastic. When they found out there was not any childcare they did not come. So it has got a massive impact more broadly than just I need childcare for my child for whatever purpose that might be.

Schools is obviously a really key area for our young people out in rural and remote areas and the Schools Review that is underway will be very important and focusing importantly on the differences between city and country. Creating that Distance Education Teaching Allowance for those home tutors which you have had on your agenda for some time, is really important, it needs to be valued and recognised and again from the perspective that there is no alternative. Somebody needs to be in that home educating those children because there is not a school next door like there is in the

middle of Sydney or Melbourne or Brisbane and recognising the importance of that. For me it is not just about the dollars, it is about the recognition of the role that is played by those home tutors and [is] very important so I will continue to put that on the table for you.

Many remote students have very little option other than boarding and I know this comes up time and time again. I know there is a motion on the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program and some suggestions around that and how that might work. Noting that was the former Coalition Government who put this in place in the first instance and well done to the current Government for keeping it in place with a few changes but for continuing that on because it is very important, noting that it is a pilot program. There are no never-ending bucket of money under Parliament House but what is important is that this will take place. What it will do is give the opportunity to really underpin the importance of that boarding assistance in terms of accessibility and making sure that those students have opportunity, so I think that is a very important thing going forward.

Just the other one I wanted to mention around boarding as well because it is so important the other motion that really struck me was around the issue of fringe benefits tax for employers who are trying to support their employees and keep their employees who otherwise would move away because of the cost of sending children away to school, get hit with this fringe benefits tax, that to me is kind of illogical when you have got those circumstances. So again something I will be following up for you.

There are a number of other issues around schools, around access to allied health and support services and careers advice for students. This is where I go back to running all of those things together, like early childhood and schools and higher education. Careers advice should be happening from right back when they are little, about their future opportunities and what they have and how we do that better because our young people cannot be what they cannot see and the more we give them something to see and the more we give them opportunity, I just think it is absolutely vital and it is our responsibility to absolutely do that.

Certainly around tertiary education, you all know as well as anyone the challenges there are around at the cost of relocation, the difficulties that I mentioned before around being away from home, social dislocation and there were just a couple of things I wanted to mention that again you have raised. One is the Independent Youth Allowance and the notion that the moment the student leaves home they should qualify as independent and be able to get the assistance. Does that not just make sense? Now the fact they have to work for a year to get Independent Youth Allowance goes against all the research that has been done that says if they have a year off they are less likely to go onto university so the fact the construct is set up that they have to do that, to get the financial assistance seems odd, notwithstanding a lot of our young people need a break after school, absolutely get that, before they think about going onto further education.

You have also made some comments in the motions that I picked up as well around the Tertiary Access Payment and around the timing of that payment. I have already, having read the motions, started having some discussions around that. It does not seem logical getting paid after you relocate for a payment that is supposed to help you relocate. So it just seems a little perverse and I am certainly following that up. Also the interesting idea of expanding it to apprentices which also I think is very interesting. One of the things I am looking at, within the Tertiary Access Payment, is that students who take a gap year cannot access it. Just again illogical. So a number of things there. Thank you for raising those and not only the motions that are being mentioned today but I have been through all of them, and I know you are fabulous Alana and your team, at making sure after your conferences I get all of the follow-up information, everything that I need to be able to advocate on your behalf. I thank you very much for that.

I just wanted to conclude on a couple of things and one is the Universities Accord process, of which I am a panel member. This is a review that has been set up, it will take 12 months, to look into the future of higher education and that includes vocational education and training as well as higher education in universities. So there are six of us on the panel and it is a very big piece of work and we have got a very broad terms of reference and we have been charged with coming up with, as the Minister termed, 'spiky' ideas so our chair came up with a great idea of putting this fabulous picture of an echidna on the front of the interim report that we have just released. It is a one in a generation or decade, whatever word you want to use, opportunity to look at the future of higher education and to be able to be on that panel and consistently filter in the importance of rural and regional and remote, I think is an extraordinary opportunity for us to be able to have as this process goes along.

So we just released the interim report which I encourage you to have a look at and it has raised a number of issues for discussion. We recommended five key things, one of which was expanding the Regional University Centres which the former Coalition Government put in place the RUCs and now the current government is expanding them which is fantastic also. These give that real opportunity on the ground in some of our communities for students, who otherwise would not access higher education with that online learning support and more broadly a whole lot of other aspects which is just terrific. The report has raised things for consideration which is why I am really keen for you to have a look and to get your response from ICPA. There is a number of things in there around rural, regional and remote. We talk a lot about the importance of regional universities, not only to the students but to the communities that they are in and I am sure a number of your children are at regional universities. We have also raised the idea of having a single national regional university, we were asked for spiky ideas and that is really spiky! For me I think it has a lot of merit and looking at the circumstance where you could have the creation of a national regional university, if you like a sister university to ANU, a new high reputation high-quality high value with regional universities opting in. Something I certainly think has merit to explore and without, in anyway, removing local presence or local autonomy because I think it is so important if we are going to think about doing something like that. It is about strengthening our regional campuses, in our regional communities, not diminishing them. So, I would encourage you all to have a look through the report and perhaps ICPA might like to come back with a submission. Submissions are open till 1 September and then we will conclude with a final report with full recommendations in December. It is great that we actually have got now another period of time for consultation and for discussion to make sure we get it right and I particularly want to get it right from the rural and regional and remote perspective which is where advice from people like all of you here at ICPA and many other organisations will be absolutely invaluable.

So, in conclusion Alana I would just like to firstly thank you and congratulate you for the role you have played. I know you are having to step down from your role, I really do just want to acknowledge the extraordinary amount of work that you have done and the way in which you have conducted yourself. I can say that from having worked with you for a period of time, it is extraordinary and I have I have dealt with an awful lot of people and your representation of this organisation is just absolutely impeccable, you are professional, you cut to the chase, you passionately represent what all these people need you to do, so I just wanted to thank you very much for all of the service that you have given.

I meant to do this at the very beginning as my very first acknowledgement, if someone could please pass on for me, I do not know how many national anthems I have sat in a room and listened to at the opening of a conference or an event, those girls from Haileybury were unbelievable, that is the best national anthem I have ever heard at any conference. So, if my appreciation could be passed back to those girls.

So, thank you very much all of you for being here, it is almost like being in a room of friends when I come to ICPA, it is just fantastic. I not only want to thank all the delegates, but all of the observers and the business supporters here, it is a big effort. All of the business supporters and the organisations who are here giving your support, gives a lot of strength to this organisation in that you are respecting and valuing what they do so I thank you for doing that for ICPA.

So, all the very best with your deliberations. I will obviously continue to work with you very closely and hope to continue to be a good friend to ICPA. I will do everything I can to be your champion. I will not be able to achieve everything you want but I can tell you I will absolutely be trying because it is so important for our young people and children out across this country that they have the ICPA and that they have the decision-makers at the end of that, who are implementing what you know will make such a difference for their futures.

So, thank you very much for having me and I am absolutely delighted to officially declare the 52nd ICPA conference open. Thank you.

Conference Address

Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm
Assistant Minister for Education and Assistant Minister for Regional Development
Australian Government

Good morning everyone, I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are gathered here today the Larrakia people and pay my respects to Elders past and present. I also want to acknowledge all the First Nations people in attendance here today. I am very proud to be part of a government that will give all Australians the opportunity to vote for recognition of First Nations people in our Constitution in the last quarter of this year.

It's an absolute pleasure to be here at the 52nd Annual Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) Federal Conference. The Australian Government have funded the ICPA through the Grant-in-Aid program since 1998-99 financial year and we are currently negotiating a new contract with them moving forward.

I had to deliver a video message for this conference last year in Perth, so it is great to be here with you in person today.

First and foremost, I would like to underline the significance of this organisation, which dedicates its service to ensure all geographically isolated students' education needs and aspirations are not disadvantaged due to where they live.

Since the ICPA's foundation in 1971, you have supported equity of access to education for geographically isolated families across the country for over 50 years. Your support for over 2500 families and children across Australia, particularly those families in rural and remote locations, is inspiring. Your work is hugely valuable in the mission to provide equal opportunities for education in this country.

Challenges and opportunities

We all know how important education is in Australia. Every child should be able to benefit from a quality education regardless of their postcode, regardless of where they live. Yet we know that many families in geographically isolated areas face barriers in terms of access to education. We understand that kids from disadvantaged backgrounds or from the bush are less likely to go to preschool, and missing out on quality early education opportunities, or not being able to access them, can have a

potentially profound compounding effect. Not being ready to start school means that children are more likely to fall behind at primary school and through secondary school years. And it means children are less likely to finish high school and less likely to go on to university.

For Indigenous Australians, who make up about half of all remote students, the gaps in education access and outcomes are even wider. We need to close the gap between city and country, as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds and from the bush are three times more likely to fall behind other children in the classroom.

Challenges for regional education

The disparity in education outcomes for students in regional and remote locations across Australia continues to be impacted by unique and complex factors. This is due to geographic isolation and the access to and delivery of services that are compounded by increases of remoteness.

There are education challenges that students in urban areas face in all stages of their educational journey. For example,

- The lack of high-quality early childhood education impacts a child's ability to be prepared to start school once they reach the right age
- Students may need to study via distance education and the resulting impact that's placed on families regarding supervision, lack of resources and face-to-face contact with teachers and peers
- Families choose to send their child to attend boarding school where they can have more access to subjects and extra-curricular activities
- Knowledge and access to post-school options are also difficult to obtain career advice, knowledge of courses and financial implications of needing to move away for further study.

The Halsey Review (2018) identified key challenges in delivering education priorities in regional, rural and remote areas to ensure that all young people have access to high-quality schooling and opportunities. The four priority areas were:

1. Establishing a national focus for regional, rural and remote education
2. Leadership, teaching, curriculum and assessment
3. Access to reliable and cost-effective information and communication technologies
4. Transition into and out of school.

There is a need for a collaborative approach between all key stakeholders that support regional students and communities. This means from the Australian Government, state and territory governments, local governments, and education authorities, through to community organisations providing wrap-around services.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Schools Australia 2022, more than 1.1 million school students live in regional and remote areas – around 27 per cent of all Australian school students. Attendance data provided by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) also suggest schools in non-metropolitan areas have lower school attendance, with rates in remote areas under 80 per cent. So, there are a lot of challenges, but the Government is determined and we are responding in a considered and wholistic way.

Australian Government initiatives

The Australian Government will provide an estimated \$575.6 million to schools in 2023 through the regional loading:

- \$252.6 million to government schools and
- \$323 million to non-government schools.

More broadly, an estimated \$6.1 billion in total funding will be provided for regional and remote students in 2023:

- \$2.6 billion for regional and remote government schools and
- \$3.4 billion for regional and remote non-government schools.
- In 2023, regional and remote schools have higher pre-student funding amounts than metropolitan schools.
 - \$8,228 per student for regional and remote schools compared to \$6,411 per student for metropolitan schools.

The work of the Teacher Education Expert Panel, led by Professor Mark Scott, has concluded with the Panel making 14 recommendations to improve teacher education training. The Education Ministers Meeting on 6 July provided in-principle support for all of the recommendations and agreed some initial actions, including the need for funding models to support rural and remote placements and accreditation standards, including differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs and abilities. The Expert Panel thank the ICPA's engagement with the work of the Teacher Education Expert Panel, particularly for making a submission. The ICPA's proposed suggestions for reform are in line with the recommendations in the Panel's final report.

There are also significant pieces of reform work in progress across the Education portfolio more broadly. The Government's cheaper child care reforms took effect from 10 July, with the increase in Child Care Subsidy providing real cost-of-living relief for more than 1.2 million Australian families. The base subsidy rates for all families earning up to \$530,000 has increased, with the maximum subsidy rising to 90 per cent for families earning \$80,000 or less, meaning more families are now eligible for subsidised early childhood education and care. Importantly, a base entitlement of 36 hours per fortnight of subsidised early childhood education and care is now available for First Nations children, regardless of family activity. This will benefit up to 6,600 families and encourage more families with First Nations children to engage in early childhood education and care.

In the May Budget, the Government invested \$63.9 million in an early childhood education workforce package, focusing support on the retention and skills development of early childhood educators, particularly in regional and remote communities. The Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System, which is being chaired by Dr Lisa O'Brien, will focus on driving real and measurable improvements for students experiencing disadvantage, and will help to inform governments about specific reforms to pursue through the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA). It will provide advice to Government on the specific reforms that should be tied to funding in the next National School Reform Agreement. The Regional Education Commissioner, the Hon Fiona Nash, who I understand opened the conference yesterday, is a member of the NSRA Ministerial Reference Group. My colleague, the Minister for Education, Jason Clare, has made it clear that central to the development of the next NSRA is the idea that while Australia has a good education system, it can be a lot better and a lot fairer. While I'm on the topic, I want to specifically thank ICPA Federal President Alana Moller, who took part in the National School Reform Agreement Ministerial Reference Group meeting recently on Friday 7 July. I understand Alana will be stepping down as federal president after this conference. Alana, your work for the ICPA has been sensational and I wanted to express my gratitude for all your hard work. I wish you all the very best for the future.

And, of course, there's also the work to develop an Australian Universities Accord, the interim report for which was released on 19 July with a very strong focus on equity and access particular for students in regional, rural and remote areas. Immediate action that the Government will take in response to the interim report includes establishing up to 20 new Regional University Study Hubs. I have had the pleasure of being involved in opening a number of new Regional University Study Hubs, most recently the Country Universities Centre Cape York in Cooktown. These hubs work. They are a great model which is working to provide more opportunities for students in regional centres to engage in tertiary

education. To date, the hubs are currently supporting more than 3400 students, who are engaged in studying more than 1000 courses through over 200 tertiary education providers around Australia. So, the Government's commitment to continue to expand this program to the benefit of regional and remote communities is very welcome.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. The value you provide to your communities around the country is immeasurable. You are an inspiration to me, and to many families and children around Australia. Where a child lives should never dictate the pathways set for them, or the opportunities they choose to pursue as they grow up.

As I sign off here today, let us all keep working together to open the door of opportunity for all Australians. I look forward to attending more events for this organisation moving forward.

PRESENTATIONS

Judy Newton
Federal Life Membership
Alana Moller

In 2009 in Longreach Queensland, Federal Council with thanks in part to Jack Beach, welcomed Judy Newton as a Councillor. This proved to be the start of 10 very productive years on Council during which Judy's invaluable contribution to ICPA Federal Council and the organisation as a whole would be an enduring legacy.

In 2010, during the Federal Conference in Perth, Judy stepped up to the Vice-President position, followed by the President position at Federal Conference in Darwin in 2011.

Judy moved from a councillor who was a little unsure of her abilities and very reticent to put herself out there, especially in terms of public speaking, to the Judy who has dedicated her time, expertise and enthusiasm to represent ICPA at a national level so passionately over more than a decade.

In addition to her president and vice president roles, Judy led the rural schools and curriculum portfolios at varying points, was an active member of others, always willing and very generous in offering her time and knowledge to support others outside of her portfolios, especially encouraging and mentoring new councillors. Judy was also the ICPA representative on ACARA and NRHA and has been the Federal Council conference liaison working with Federal Conference conveners.

During Judy's time on Federal Council there were many achievements made, many of which she most certainly had input into ensuring they came to fruition including the live streaming of the launch of nbn's long term satellite "Sky Muster" in 2015. Judy was progressive as a president and not afraid to make changes that would benefit Council and ICPA Australia.

During her time on federal council, the ICPA website saw a massive overhaul along with major constitutional changes. Always thinking of others, Judy introduced the annual joint state and federal council meetings, a wonderful initiative.

Judy was Federal President during devastating droughts and rural adversity however, despite these adversities and personal challenges Judy led by example with grace and humility always keeping members issues at the forefront.

Judy's welcoming demeanour, and generous nature towards new and current councillors during her 4 years as President saw her lead a cohesive and formidable group, meticulously planned and

executed delegations which ensured an enduring respect for ICPA Aust and all the organisation stands for and a dedication to creating equitable opportunities.

Judy's dedication to ICPA continued when she stepped into the role of Convenor of the 2020 Federal Conference. This conference, as a result of COVID-19, became the first online conference, a challenging task, in which her guiding and supporting hand was welcomed and appreciated.

More recently, in 2022 Judy assumed the role of Federal Membership Officer. This position was created under her auspices during her time as Federal President and it has given her enormous pleasure to once again be working with Federal and State Councillors and more importantly for Judy, the members.

For her incredible and inspiring leadership, professional approach towards the organisation, her commitment, patience, generosity of time, encouragement, knowledge, guidance, dedication, passion, honesty, support, positivity and for all Judy has and still gives unconditionally to the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, and how proud I feel to have the opportunity to present this award before I stand down as Federal President, it is with great pleasure that I present the award of Federal Life Membership to Judy Newton.

Jane O'Brien
Certificate of Merit
Wendy Hick

Well sometimes plans don't go the way we want and we had hoped that for the membership officer discussion today we'd be able to also have attending with Judy, Jane O'Brien. So since she isn't able to be with us, I'd like to tell everyone a bit about Jane.

Jane O'Brien, former and our first ICPA Federal Membership Officer Jane O'Brien, who stood down from the role last year. Jane is an exceptional individual who made remarkable strides during her tenure on the Federal Council. Jane won't like me saying all of this, because above all else, Jane is quite humble, doesn't think what she does is any different than anyone else and she doesn't like to stand out. Well, I've got news for her- Jane, you are more special thank you think and you DO stand out, for all the right reasons- your commitment to ICPA and especially your commitment to the membership area of the organization shines quite brightly. After joining Federal Council in 2014 at the Tasmania conference, she served diligently until 2022. Jane's passion for training saw her lead the Federal Training portfolio for many years, advocating for access to effective and equitable training programs and opportunities for rural and remote students.

What has set Jane apart from many, was that she was instrumental in notable transformations to the membership model, significantly alleviating the burden on Branch, State and Federal Treasurers and ushering in a wave of change in the organisation. Jane worked with Federal Council and then Federal Treasurer, Anita Dennis, to create the role of a Federal Membership Officer, of which Jane became the first to hold the position. Jane was at the forefront of developing online membership and she tackled the challenges and imposts we faced as she received the first online membership payments, paving the way for continued growth and development across the ICPA membership model.

Jane's selfless nature knows no bounds! She has gone above and beyond by consistently lending her time and expertise to train and support countless new treasurers and membership officers,

assisting them to manage ICPA memberships across Australia. Jane worked tirelessly to try to ensure the transition to our organisation's new online membership would be as smooth as practically possible and she put in countless hours offering information sessions and discussions with state treasurers and branch treasurers to try to ensure that everyone felt comfortable moving forward with this big new step for ICPA. In her 9 years on Federal Council Jane was a valuable and respected member, combining the Membership Officer role with the role of a Councillor and providing sensible, steady support and guidance to three Presidents and the whole Federal Council team.

Jane has had an incredible impact on ICPA and made history as the first-ever Federal Membership Officer — this major achievement is only one example of how Jane's unwavering dedication and vision have made a lasting impact.

Jane is also very good at “smelling a rat”- and I think that might be part of why she found another pressing place to be today and wasn't able to join us.

With that said and in recognition of her contribution, support and work performed for ICPA, I take great pleasure today in presenting Jane O'Brien with an ICPA Australia Certificate of Merit.

Farewell to Wendy Hick

Wendy Henning

- W - Wendy Hick, Thornton Station, Camooweal, A Long Way From Her Native US
- E - Educated, Eloquent, Exceptional As Those Who Have Worked With Her Would Attest
- N - Never Judgmental, Accepting Of Everyone, Her Gentle Nature Is A Sight To Behold
- D - Dedicated To Family, Friends And The Organisation, Not Afraid To Step Up And Be Bold
- Y - Years Of Commitment And Passion, Making A Difference Wherever She Goes
- H - Heart Of Gold, With A Spirit That Truly Glows
- I - Isolated Children's Parents' Association, ICPA Through And Through, So Many Stories That She Could Tell
- C - Communications, Of Course The Portfolio That Wendy Does Know So Well
- K - Kind, Gentle, Strong Spirit, A True Gem To Behold

Dedicated, eloquent, capable and knowledgeable, Wendy Hick is all of those and so many more. ICPA has been the fortunate recipient of these characteristics over the years of her dedication to the organisation. As Wendy's tenure as the Immediate Past President (IPP) with Federal Council is now at a close, it is time to take a moment to reflect on this remarkable lady and her ICPA story.

Four years as IPP, four years as President of ICPA Aust, 3 years as QLD Vice President and 2 years as a State Councillor and for all of those years and longer a Mt Isa BOTA Branch Member.

Wendy joined Federal Council in 2015 at the Brisbane Conference, stepping straight into the President role, whilst also Vice President of QLD. Wendy also so capably has so many other roles other than her ICPA roles, she is a wife to Lloyd and mother to Adam and Zac. Business partner, Supportive, efficient, passionate, intelligent, astute and connected, the Communications Portfolio can give the average reader disconnect but with Wendy's knowledge, time and detailed explanations it is a fascinating learning experience reading reports, news and updates. The depth of Wendy's knowledge is mind blowing but her patience with the not so knowledgeable is more so!

Modest, unassuming, sentimental, inspiring and an empathic listener, every rural child, everywhere are all as important as her own when Wendy is advocating for our children. In her quiet but effective way, it doesn't matter who you are or where, it is best to listen and learn as Wendy works to ensure all children can access and receive the education they deserve. This is the legacy that Wendy leaves to ICPA as she closes this chapter and begins her next. We wish you well Wendy and look forward to seeing what life after ICPA brings to you and your family.

From one Wendy H to the other
Thank you.

Farewell to Sue Shotton

Kate Thompson

I am honoured to be delivering the farewell to Sue Shotton, the ICPA Web Manager. This is going to be hard to say good bye so I'll start by saying - Sue this is not good bye but see you later.

Sue is a quiet achiever, humble while fiercely passionate, and incredibly knowledgeable through her sheer determination to do her job at the high standards that she sets herself, with most being self-taught. Sue was no stranger to volunteering - off-duty nurse, editor, fundraising superstar for the local school and community, teacher support, home tutor, friend and as Sue put "general dog's body and taxi driver for her girls taking them weekly to Darwin for opportunities/experiences while doing DE in their senior year.

Sue spent her childhood in Tasmania and fittingly joined Federal Council in 2008 in Hobart and stepped off Council in Launceston in 2014 and luckily for us she didn't continue the trend of making moves at a Tasmanian hosted conference and step down from her off-council web manager role in 2020.

I am hoping I have these details correct, Sue has spent 36 years in Douglas Daly, a "semi-remote region" where she and husband Peter brought up 2 gorgeous girls, educating them through DE for preschool, a one teacher small rural school for primary and DE again for secondary before they both went onto tertiary studies. Sue and her girls' educational experience is the subject of Chapter 13 in Paula Heelan's *Outback Governesses*. and Sue is quoted as saying "My previous work as a nurse did little to prepare me for distance education and especially distance education at a senior level. T'was quite a challenge"

During her 6 years on Federal Council, Sue held positions of councillor, VP, Treasurer, Webmaster and Web Manager which she has continued after stepping off FC in 2014 and was involved with the Specific Education Needs, DE and Tertiary portfolios.

Sue's contribution to Federal Council and ICPA is varied but of particular note is her tireless work for 10 years on the website. Sue was instrumental in:

- the establishment of two ICPA websites involving countless hours with researching options and meetings with Federal and State Councils and website developers to develop a website with a database that would see ICPA through for many years. I am sure when Sue was involved in the first website development, she didn't imagine that she would do it all again in 2019 and it is a credit to your persistence, tenacity, hard work and knowledge that the website went live in 2021 and is what it is today. Sue has expertly managed the website for both Federal and State Councils for the last 10 years, ironed out the glitches, ensured the website is maintained, up-to-date, fit for purpose, current, modern and user-friendly.
- In 2017, Sue assisted with the development of the online membership system.
- Sue has managed the email addresses and mailboxes, which is no mean feat as there are many emails addresses within ICPA.

- And since 2017 Sue has been the Federal Conference AV assistant extraordinaire in conjunction with the AV tech person managed all the PowerPoint presentations, motions, slides, videos and other technological wonders that have ensured the Federal Conference run smoothly and is engaging.

Needless to say, in 2018 Sue was awarded an ICPA Australia Award of Merit and in 2021 was awarded ICPA Australia Federal Life Membership.

Sue, on behalf of ICPA (Aust) - our members, branches, State Councils and Federal Council thank you for all you have done for ICPA - your passion, dedication, knowledge, expert advice, tips and explanations especially in the website space, willingness to share and support us all, patience, commitment, making yourself available, encouragement, guidance and friendship. We know you will be always on the end of the phone while we navigate this website gig without you. Sue, you can be very proud that you are leaving ICPA with a fantastic website that will grow and develop in the future.

Enjoy your semi-retirement (dare I say that). I am sure Peter and the girls are looking forward to having you a bit more available, and not to hear 'just got to do this for ICPA'.

I am going to conclude with a quote from Sue.

A take home message from me (Sue):

"A busy person always finds time for more things and there is nothing more important than ensuring remote and isolated children have access to a quality education just like their urban counterparts. The changes are slow and might not benefit your children directly but it will benefit the next generation."

Alana Moller
Outgoing Federal President
Nikki Mahony

There are three things that spring to mind when I think of Alana,

- Shoes
- daily affirmations
- and cups of tea!

Well, that and her capacity to be across all the portfolios, attend a never ending stream of meetings, have the occasional meltdown, get back up again, do a check in on the team, rally others with gifts, flowers and uplifting quotes, tag some calves, attend a local show or sports camp, cook for her family and teach some distance ed lessons. Then rinse and repeat.

Now Alana Moller apparently blew onto Federal Council from nowhere (or more accurately was swept up by an ICPA tornado in 2017 from The Star of Hope distance ed classroom, Clermont Qld). Landing with a thump in Adelaide, stepping into the President job in 2019, she cried all the way home on the plane wondering what she had gotten herself into, then promptly pulled on her boots (very funky ones) and set to work!

Over the school holidays Alana crammed like a uni student trying to convince Centrelink of her independent status. She came up for air the other side, reeling off ministers, advisors, elected members and departmental staff, with a phenomenal understanding of federal education policy, stats for every iteration of "student" and costings for every ICPA ask at her fingertips.

Anyone else with hereditary hearing loss and anxiety would consider these perfectly good reasons to hold back just a little, but Alana never once considered either a viable excuse, because she is so fiercely passionate about rural and remote education and would heaven and earth for GI kids and their families. Instead, she embraced Bluetooth technology and Charlie Mackesey quotes in an effort to stay connected and stay grounded, so well in fact that many people would never know!

There has been many a government official who has been very swiftly blown away by this seemingly reserved, diminutive, pocket rocket as she hits full throttle! She is a force to be reckoned with if you're not taking our country kids futures seriously enough.

Current and previous federal councillors have so many fond memories of her journey and these are just a few of them.

Alana's first conference as President in 2020 was very swiftly moved online thanks to a little global pandemic. She still gets cold sweats at the mention of solar flares, the phrase "Please refresh your screens" and a certain someone proposing a foreshadowed amendment which caused nothing short of a meltdown at our main base. Poor Kim has never been able to live that one down!

Kristen Coggan - now with the Regional Tech Hub recalls "the incessant sound of that clicking pen" along with the midnight phone calls and messages because they were both still up.

Wendy Henning loves that in lead up to 2021 Federal Conference in Longreach Alana's first line of enquiry was "if rainwater was available for cups of tea."

Nikki Macqueen recounts "One of her funniest and scariest memories when Alana and she overnighted in Brisbane after a Western Australian conference. Clattering and banging around the twin share room was not enough to wake Alana up the next morning and Nikki was so scared that she checked Alana's breathing before resorting to vigorous shaking. It turns out that when Alana disconnects her sound and sleeps, she sleeps very, very deeply.

If any of us ever find ourselves stranded in strange locations or sideswiped by family emergencies, medical hiccups or natural disasters, a bunch of flowers and little notes of support have mysteriously found their way to our door of an absurd Airbnb in Hobart, a hotel in Tamworth, a friends back gate in Brisbane or an isolated property in the middle of Whoop Whoop. For any intelligence agencies on the lookout, in a life after ICPA, Alana would make a great covert operative!

She fondly refers to her own family as her "Star of Hope" herd.... They are her pride and joy and have all been cheerleaders, touchstones and support crew.

Our zoom meetings wouldn't feel complete without her youngest daughter Addi diligently completing her schoolwork or beetling away on some project in the background – Who can forget the sudden whirr of beaters one night she decided to make butter because she was bored waiting for her mother for dinner.

Daughters Mackenzie and Zarah were stationed at Townsville Grammar where Alana and then secretary Sue Wilson found themselves chairing the online 2020 conference. They manned Alana's phone and were the message runners between her and the rest of our far-flung team as we changed things on the fly from various parts of the country.

And of course, Scott. Being fill-in school teacher, cheerleader, sidekick and branch delegate at conferences, quietly going about his own business and slotting into the ICPA team in his stride. What better support crew could you hope for.

Alana,

Thank you for your leadership of ICPA through a very interesting four years. Despite your detours of doubt, you have capably guided ICPA families through the maelstrom of a COVID-pocked

battleground which completely changed the educational landscape, not just for our country kids, but for children worldwide.

This year not only marks the end of your time as President of ICPA but the final chapter on your 14 years of teaching Distance Ed.

It's a phenomenal effort. You should be so incredibly proud!

It turns out your funky boots were not only for making a fashion statement, but making a stand, making a journey, and making a difference.

Which actually brings to mind a poem by Donna Ashworth that portrays a sentiment many of us can relate to attending an ICPA conference.

I love your shoes (Donna Ashworth)

I said your hair looked amazing but what I really wanted to say was...

"Your energy sparks a little bit of something in mine,

Your smile warms my heart, and when you laugh, I just have to laugh too, it's like a bubbling stream of fresh water running through my soul.

I feel like the sun is shining when you're near and when I leave you, sad as it is, I feel like I've been charged, plugged into the mains for an infusion of fizz and life."

But I said "I love your shoes" instead.

I hope you heard, what I really meant.

So, to our very own boot-scooting, storm in a teacup.

You'll not be clicking those fancy little heels together to go home entirely. ICPA Federal Council will still be the beneficiary of your memory bank and check-ins from the ex officio position of IPP.

Just as Dorothy finally understands in the Wizard of Oz, *"You had the power all along my dear"*.

For all those thoughtful notes and to celebrate your love of hot "cuppa" and four years of leading ICPA, we would like to present you with a thank you gift and this hand-painted teapot depicting your life with your Star of Hope herd and your ICPA family. Filled with lots of tiny little notes from everyone here in this room, so you can fill your own cup, anytime you want.

Closing Conference

Alana Moller

As the sun sets on our 52nd Federal Conference and my 4th and last as Federal President, it is my time to say thank you to you all. To everyone who has in anyway contributed to the

Conference - Conference Mic runners, the AV team, photographer Hannah Calcino, scrutineers Richard and Jordan and once again and especially Suzanne Wilson and her NT Convening Committee, thank you your enormous efforts and congratulations on pulling off an extraordinary event.

And my gratitude to everyone who has been a part of my past four years as President - all Federal Councillors over the past four years, thank you for your support, patience and commitment to holding me up when I have fallen and sharing the high highs and sometimes lower lows of the past four years, but especially those who have picked up a whole lot of slack in the background – you know who you are. The one name I am going to mention specifically though is Wendy Hick. Rarely in our lives we are blessed with beautiful, incredible, brave, strong, amazing people in our lives. Wendy you are one of those rare gems and I will forever be blessed to have you in my life. I also must mention the exceptional off-Council support team, Sue, Nikki and Judy in particular, past-ICPA stalwarts and brains

trusts, State Councils and especially I honour all of the remarkable State Presidents I have had the opportunity to go in to bat with over the past four years, as well as stakeholders, with a special shout-out to Richard Stokes and ABSA - I am sorry Jared and Tom were here to hear this, to all colleagues across all other likeminded organisations, politicians and their teams, department staff, friends, anyone who has contributed to my time as Federal President, too many to name, please consider this as my heartfelt thank you to you all. And of course, to my fellow ICPA members and their children, thank you for your trust and faith in me as Federal President and the Federal Council to represent and advocate on behalf of you, for if we don't who will?

But lastly and definitely not least is the need to give my ultimate gratitude, praise and admiration to my little Star of Hope Herd – Scott, Mykenzie, Zarah and Addison, who have been as loyal to ICPA in the past 4 years as I have. I am first and foremost the old mother cow of our herd and after Addison asking me a couple of weeks ago if the reason I don't listen when she talks to me sometimes is because ICPA is more important than her, I want to assure and reassure that they will always be at the top of my list, even though sometimes it may not seem that way.

I look forward to continuing to be part of the remarkable ICPA Federal Council as Immediate Past President and know I will certainly still have plenty to keep me busy, however as I close this chapter of my life as Federal President, I hope that my lasting legacy is that my fellow ICPA members will always remember that being geographically isolated does not mean you are alone.

And so, with no further ado, I declare the 52nd ICPA Federal Conference closed. Safe journey home everyone and farewell.

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE**FEDERAL COUNCIL**

President	Alana Moller
Vice President	Julia Broad
Immediate Past President	Wendy Hick
Secretary	Kim Hughes
Assistant Secretary	Kate Thompson
Treasurer	Nikki Mahony
Publicity Officer	Ali Allison
Councillors	Wendy Henning Anna McCorkle Miffy Waugh Naomi Obst Laura Stalley
ICPA Website Manager	Sue Shotton
Federal Webmaster	Nikki Macqueen
Pedals Editor	Hannah Calcino

FEDERAL LIFE MEMBERS

Federal Life Member	Jack Beach
Federal Life Member	Sue Shotton
Northern Territory Patron	Hon Vicki O'Halloran AO, CVO

STATE COUNCIL DELEGATES

New South Wales	Tanya Mitchell	Libby McPhee
Northern Territory	Moirra Lanzarin	Kiya Gill
Queensland	Kate Bradshaw	Anneli Day (1) Kasie Scott (2)
South Australia	Kirsty Williams	Hollie Williams
Western Australia	Jane Cunningham	Louise Ford

BRANCH DELEGATES

Alice Springs NT	Danyelle Haigh	Samantha Selmes (1) Katy Hayes (2)
Alpha QLD	Sarah Bridgman	
Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville QLD	Sandra Scholefield	
Bourke NSW	Amanda Bell	Matthew McCorkle
Broken Hill NSW	Georgina Luckraft	
Capricornia Branch of the Air QLD	Ainsley McArthur	Rob McArthur
Central West Plains NSW	Judith Bryant	
Charters Towers QLD	Maxine Sharpe	Sonia Spurdle
Clermont QLD	Lizzie Burnett	Scott Moller
Dawson Valley QLD	Bron Christensen	
Far North Queensland QLD	Karen Muccignat (1) Robyn O'Brien (2)	Melissa Cowe (1) Juanita Saal (2)
Flinders Ranges SA	Lisa Slade	
Gascoyne WA	Mary Wake	
Goldfields Eyre WA	Katie Hall	Madeline Wildy

Hay NSW	Sandra Ireson	Michelle Spence
Julia Creek QLD	Jennifer Ruska	
Katherine NT	Sally Sullivan	Connie Wood
Kimberley Air WA	Jo Camilleri (2)	
Kindon QLD	Andrew Waugh	Lisa Waugh
Lakes District WA	Fiona Hobley	Arlene Sutherland
Marla Oodnadatta SA	Dani Chapman	
Marree Air SA	Lisa Edwards	Lucy Morphett
Meekatharra Air WA	Tracie Blair	Olivia Ford
Midwest WA	Jasmyn Allen	Sally Brindal
Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld QLD	Ashley Purcell	Page Vidler
Mt Isa Branch of the Air QLD	Margaret Brock	
Tambo QLD	Louise Martin	Stacey Ryrrie
Tasmania TAS	Edwina Champion	
Tibooburra-Milparinka NSW	Fiona Hotchin	
Walgett NSW	Cath Deshon	Karen Ricardo
Wentworth NSW	Merida Healy	Bree Wakefield

LONE MEMBER DELEGATES

SA Lone Member	Jodie Keogh	
Territory Wide NT	Clair O'Brien	Ruth Woerle

BRANCH OBSERVERS

Alice Springs NT	Amber Driver	Kylie Jones
	Elizabeth Bird	Kerrie Russell
	Katy Hayes (1)	Samantha Selmes (2)
Bollon QLD	Tiffany Larkin	
Far North Queensland QLD	Kerrie Archer	Emmalee Jonsson
	Robyn O'Brien (1)	Juanita Saal (1)
	Karen Muccignat (2)	Melissa Cowe (2)
Goldfields Eyre WA	Karen Forrester	Ross Wood
Julia Creek QLD	Kym Cockram	
Katherine NT	Victoria Burke	Sally Dyer
	Liz Cook	Helen Harding
	Amanda Murphy	Hannah Blokland
	Julie Richter	Sarah Hughes
	Meg Watters	Maree Molinaro
	Rebecca Mohr-Bell	Jessica Coronas
Territory Wide NT	Sarah Barker	Maryanne St Claire
	Michelle Gibson	
Wentworth NSW	Rachael Litchfield	

STATE COUNCIL OBSERVERS

Northern Territory State Council	Katherine Atkins	Kerrie Scott
	Melissa Kerr	Suzanne Wilson
	Jacinta McInnerney	
Queensland State Council	Kasie Scott (1)	Anneli Day (2)

CONVENING COMMITTEE

Liz Cook	Jacinta McInerney	Suzanne Wilson
Kiya Gill	Rebecca Mohr-Bell	Sue Shotton
Melissa Kerr	Clair O'Brien	Moira Lanzarin
Julie Richter		

CONFERENCE GUESTS

Rod Olsen	Head of Senior School	Anglican Church Grammar School
Aaron Tam	Relationship Manager	ANZ
Andy Tchea	Senior Small Business Specialist	
Annie Sargood	Director	Australia's Leading Home Care Agency
Jen O'Reilly	Home Safety and ACCS Support Team	
Richard Stokes	CEO	Australian Boarding Schools Association
Jordan Swepson	Director of Member Services	
Jenny Johnson	Senior Policy and Development Officer	Australian College of Rural & Remote Medicine
Annabelle Brayley		
Kelly Lindsay	Consumer Engagement and Membership Lead	Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
Dianne Giblin	CEO	Australian Council of State School Organisations
Sharron Healy	President	
Karen Robertson		Australian Parents Council
Amy Wood	Head of School K-6	Brisbane School of Distance Education
Tracy Alder	Representative	BushEd
Jacinta Warland	Representative	
Jessica Hackett	Executive Officer	Connellan Airways Trust
Mark McLay	CEO	Country Education Partnership
Amy Williams	Program Manager	Dolly's Dream
Filomena Lay	Northern Region NT IA Manager	Early Childhood Australia NT Branch
Jo McCullough	Head of Department	eKindy Queensland
Paul McCormick		Elders
Sonia Harvey	VP Government and Community Relations	Empire Energy
The Hon Fiona Nash	Regional Education Commissioner	Federal Department of Education
Rosemary White		Federal Department of Education
Liam Cross	Policy Officer	Federal Department of Social Services
Julia Graczyk	Policy Officer	
Tamsin Jackson	Director, Student Payment Team	
Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm	Assistant Minister for Education & Senator for Queensland	Federal Government
Finbar Fuller	Adviser to the Assistant Minister for Education	

Senator Perin Davey	Senator for NSW and NSW/VIC	
Tom Wood	Lone Member	
Senator Susan McDonald	Media Advisor to Senator	
Amanda Campbell- Wilson	Davey	
	Senator for Qld	
Felicity Pearson	Policy Advisor to Senator	Haileybury Rendall School
Rachel Hay	McDonald	James Cook University
Elizabeth Gubbins	Deputy Principal	Marcus Oldham College
Deb Howcroft	Foundation Manager	
Ty Casey	Assistant Head of Boarding	Marist College Ashgrove
Gavin Williams	Chief Development Officer, Regional and Remote	NBN Co
Sam Dimarco	General Manager–Segments and Stakeholders	
Elise Petty	Executive Manager-Education and Regional Stakeholder Relations	
Naomi Evans	Head of nbn Local WA	
Naomi Read	Head of nbn Local SA/NT	
Lyn O’Neil		New England Girls School
Romy Carey	Executive Officer	Northern Territory Cattleman’s Association
Agnes Mcgrath		Northern Territory Department of Education
Simone Pedder		
Aderyn Chatterton		
Anne White	Principal	Northern Territory School of Distance Education
Jo Butterworth	Executive Director, Curriculum Services Division	Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority
Jen Medway	Manager	Regional Tech Hub
Kristen Coggan	Community and Engagement Officer	
Mandy Smallacombe	Manager, Primary Health Care	Royal Flying Doctor Service
Anthony Begg		St Ignatius Riverview
Casey Brealy	Head of Boarding	St Joseph’s Nudgee College
Stephen Meara	Head of Identity	
Stuart Delaney	Director of Boarding	St Peters Lutheran College
Danny Cump	Principal	Stuartholme School
Jane Morris	Dean of Boarding	
Ryan Bettens		Telstra
Nic Danks		
Nicole Ward		
Channa Seneviratne		
Denis Malone		
Loretta Williaton		
Mary Anne Evans	Principal	The Glennie School
Emma Lowry	Deputy Principal	
Donna Grant	Director of Boarding	The Rockhampton Grammar School
Melesha Sands	Deputy Director General	Western Australia Department of Education

Jess Coolwell
 Kate Green
 Susan Montgomery
 Dean Sullivan
 Margo Sullivan

CONFERENCE APOLOGIES

Members

Ros Andrews
 Dawn Brown
 Deb Castle
 Janette De Landgraft
 Tracey Dewell
 Colleen Evans
 Carmel Elliott
 Patricia Elliott AM
 Susan Glasson
 Jane Gloster
 Julia Materne
 Megan McNicholl OAM
 Patricia Mitchell OAM
 Roxanne Morrissey
 Jo Murphy
 Judy Newton
 Kym Ross
 Judy Terry
 Rory Treweek

Branch

Katherine NT
 Moonie QLD
 Rankins Springs NSW
 Lakes District WA
 Flinders Ranges SA
 Boulia - Bedourie - Birdsville Branch QLD
 Southern Downs QLD
 Federal Life Member, Katherine, NT
 Yaraka Isisford QLD
 Federal Life Member, North East SA
 Federal Life Member, North East SA
 Federal Life Member, Western Downs QLD
 Federal Life Member, Cloncurry QLD
 Federal Life Member, Yalgoo Branch WA
 Hughenden QLD
 Walgett, NSW
 Lakes District WA
 Tasmania TAS
 Federal Life Member, Walgett NSW

Guests

Hon Dr Anne Aly MP	Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education; Minister for Youth, Member for Cowan WA
Senator Andrew Bragg	Senator for NSW
Meg Brighton	Deputy Secretary Schools Group, Australian Govt Department of Education
Hon Linda Burney MP	Minister for Indigenous Australians, Member for Barton, NSW
Hon John Carey MLA	WA Minister for Housing; Lands; Homelessness; Local Government
Hon Darren Chester MP	Shadow Minister for Regional Education, Federal Member for Gippsland, VIC
Hon Jason Clare MP	Federal Minister for Education, Member for Blaxland, NSW
Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck	Senator for Tasmania
Mr Pat Conaghan MP	Federal Member for Cowper, NSW
Hon Roger Cook MLA	Deputy Premier of Western Australia, Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade; Tourism; Commerce; Science
Senator Dorinda Cox	Senator for Western Australia
Hon Mia Davies MLA	WA Member for Central Wheatbelt
Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam	Shadow Minister for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator for Tasmania
Lia Finocchiaro MLA	NT Leader of the Opposition
Hon Paul Fletcher MP	Federal Member for Bradfield, NSW
Kate Forrest	Project Lead Industry Partnerships, NRM Regions Australia
Hon Natasha Fyles MLA	Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher	Minister for Finance; Women; Public Service, Senator for ACT
Senator Nita Green	Senator for Queensland
Hon Patrick Gorman MP	Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister, Federal Member for Perth, WA
Stacie Hansel	QLD Deputy Director-General Schools and Student Support, Department of Education
His Honour Professor the Hon Hugh Heggie PSM	Administrator of the Northern Territory
Ms Ruth Jones	Guest
Suzanne Kingwell	CEO, Contact Inc.
Hon David Littleproud MP	Leader of the Nationals, Member for Maranoa, QLD
Mr Shane Love MLA	WA Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the Nationals
Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister	Senator for NSW, Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy
Hon Michael McCormack MP	Federal Member for Riverina, NSW
Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie	Senator for Victoria
Senator Deborah O'Neill	Senator for New South Wales
Senator Fatima Payman	Senator for Western Australia
Mr Gavin Pearce MP	Federal Member for Braddon, TAS
Hon Don Punch MLA	WA Minister for Regional Services; Disability Services; Fisheries; Seniors and Aging
Mr Dan Repacholi MP	Federal Member for Hunter, NSW
Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds	Senator for WA
Lisa Rodgers	Director General, Department of Education WA
Senator the Hon Anne Ruston	Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care; Sport Senator for South Australia
Mackenzie Sedger-Small	Benevolent Society
Fiona Simson	National Farmers Federation, President
Senator Jana Stewart	Senator for Victoria
Dr Anne Webster MP	Shadow Minister for Regional Health, Federal Member for Mallee, VIC
Hon Reece Whitby MLA	WA Minister for Environment, Climate, Action, Racing and Gaming

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Annual Financial Statements

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia
Incorporated
ABN 38 908 782 315
For the year ended 31 May 2023

Prepared by Carrick Aland Accountants

Contents

3	Statement by Members of the Committee
4	Financial declaration for Responsible Person
5	Auditor's Independence Declaration
6	Statement of Cash Flows
7	Income and Expenditure Statement
10	Movements in Equity
11	Assets and Liabilities Statement
12	Notes to the Financial Statements
15	Auditor's Report

Statement by Members of the Committee

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated For the year ended 31 May 2023

We, Alana Moller, and Nikki Mahony, being members of the committee of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated and on behalf of the Committee, certify that –

1. We have compiled the accompanying special purpose financial statements of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated, which comprise the asset and liabilities statement as at 31 May 2023, income and expenditure statement, the statement of cash flows, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes. The specific purpose for which the special purpose financial statements have been prepared is set out in Note 1.
2. The statements attached to this certificate give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated during and at the end of the financial year of the association ending on 31 May 2023.
3. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the association will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.
4. These financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis which contemplates continuity of normal business activities and the realisation of assets and settlement of liabilities in the ordinary course of business. The ability of the association to continue to operate as a going concern is dependent upon the ability of the association to generate sufficient cashflows from operations to meet its liabilities. The members of the association believe that the going concern assumption is appropriate.

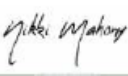
The committee of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated are solely responsible for the information contained in the special purpose financial statements, the reliability, accuracy and completeness of the information and for the determination that the basis of accounting used is appropriate to meet their needs and for the purpose that financial statements were prepared.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Members of the Committee

Signed: 

Alana Moller - President

Dated: 28/06/2023

Signed: 

Nikki Mahony - Treasurer

Dated: 27/06/2023

Financial declaration for Responsible Person

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated
For the year ended 31 May 2023

per section 60.15 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013

The Responsible People declare that in the Responsible People's opinion:

1. there are reasonable grounds to believe that the registered entity is able to pay all of its debts, as and when they become due and payable; and
2. the financial statements and notes satisfy the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

Signed in accordance with subsection 60.15(2) of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulation 2013*.

Signed: 

Alana Moller - President

Dated: 28/06/2023



AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION

To the committee of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated

In accordance with the requirements of section 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and section 80 of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)*, in relation to our audit of the financial statements of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated for the year ended 31 May 2023, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- a) No contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of section 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- b) No contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)* in relation to the audit; and
- c) No contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit

Queensland Audit Services
A Member of CPA Australia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Gripske', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kent Gripske CPA
Audit Partner

Dalby QLD

Date: 28 June 2023

Statement of Cash Flows

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated For the year ended 31 May 2023

	2023	2022
Operating Activities		
Receipts From Grants	55,000.00	58,500.00
Interest Received	6,714.37	2,181.62
Cash Receipts From Other Operating Activities	348,844.87	181,208.75
Cash Payments From Other Operating Activities	(273,771.77)	(178,073.97)
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	136,787.47	63,816.40
Investing Activities		
Other Cash Items From Investing Activities	-	1,728.00
Net Cash Flows from Investing Activities	-	1,728.00
Other Activities		
Other Activities	(11,293.00)	5,354.20
Net Cash Flows from Other Activities	(11,293.00)	5,354.20
Net Cash Flows	125,494.47	70,898.60
Cash and Cash Equivalents		
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period	521,803.28	450,904.68
Cash and cash equivalents at end of period	647,297.75	521,803.28
Net change in cash for period	125,494.47	70,898.60

Income and Expenditure Statement

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated
For the year ended 31 May 2023

	2023	2022
Revenue		
Donations & Sponsorship		
Donations		
Donations - Branch	10,050.00	7,760.46
Donations - Other	-	19,952.88
Total Donations	10,050.00	27,713.34
Sponsorship		
Sponsorship	20,386.00	44,950.47
Sponsorship (Conference)	15,000.00	40,000.00
Total Sponsorship	35,386.00	84,950.47
Total Donations & Sponsorship	45,436.00	112,663.81
Grants Received		
Government Grants Received	50,000.00	50,000.00
Other Grants Received	-	8,500.00
Total Grants Received	50,000.00	58,500.00
Other Income		
Interest Income		
Suncorp Business Saver #0139	6,301.68	-
Suncorp Dept of Education Grant #0112	328.94	-
Suncorp Tasmania State Trust #4629	83.75	-
Interest Received	-	2,181.62
Total Interest Income	6,714.37	2,181.62
Other Revenue		
Accommodation Reimbursements	4,704.55	775.14
Badges and Pins	394.24	1,933.09
Emails - Additional State Emails	156.69	-
Federal Conferences - Profit from Convening Committee	213,652.95	-
Memberships	50,493.47	63,984.11
Memberships - Tas Online Collected	139.59	-
Merchandise Sales	426.82	2,924.55
Refund on Payment	-	4.80
Reimbursement of Shared Costs	4,362.76	-
Sundry Income	-	163.25
Total Other Revenue	274,331.07	69,784.94
Total Other Income	281,045.44	71,966.56
Total Revenue	376,481.44	243,130.37
Expenditure		
Administrative Expenses		

52nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Income and Expenditure Statement

	2023	2022
Computer Software	4,808.01	2,944.61
Email Expenses	1,845.46	1,652.73
Email Expenses - Mailchimp	1,027.36	2,260.96
Licence Fees	-	1,619.82
Postage	546.61	996.13
Printing & Stationery	711.42	1,888.31
Subscriptions & Memberships	1,007.27	647.07
Web Page Expenses	6,213.00	12,663.21
Advertising	668.18	-
Bank Charges	(117.68)	247.63
Total Administrative Expenses	16,709.63	24,920.47
Audit Fees	2,965.00	2,875.00
Bad Debts	140.00	859.00
Federal Conferences Expenses		
FC - Branch Sponsorship to Attend	5,214.78	7,636.96
FC - Conference Minutes	-	25.35
FC - Convening Committee Fwd Fund	22,972.72	28,565.91
FC - Councillor Expenses	345.45	-
FC - Guest Expenses	5,518.00	4,142.43
FC - Meals, Accommodation & Travel	67,935.14	36,975.81
FC - Presentation & Gifts	1,272.34	8,917.39
FC - Printing & Stationery	144.60	76.75
FC - Profit Split to Host State	32,048.07	-
FC - Registration	6,222.73	2,600.00
FC - Website Expenses	1,782.50	-
Total Federal Conferences Expenses	143,456.33	88,940.60
Insurance Expenses		
Insurance	2,741.33	2,332.27
Total Insurance Expenses	2,741.33	2,332.27
Operating Expenses		
Badges and Pins Expenses	404.70	3,396.47
Canberra Delegation Expenses	33,167.66	19,881.34
Consultancy Fees	9,000.00	-
Corporate Memberships - State Magazines	930.91	3,473.82
Donations	50.00	9,350.00
Freight & Cartage	438.59	70.05
Fuel & Oil	597.42	-
Meetings - Face to Face	10,262.31	-
Meetings - Other Expenses	7,125.71	-
Membership Expenses	68.18	903.81
Membership Fees - Tasmania Online Memberships	77.19	532.00
State Conferences	16,365.31	11,202.86
Staff Training & Welfare	5,600.00	72.73
Sundry Expenses	5.47	7,550.92

52nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Income and Expenditure Statement

	2023	2022
<hr/>		
Travelling Expenses	3,012.88	-
Total Operating Expenses	87,106.33	56,434.00
<hr/>		
Other Expenses		
Closure of ANZ Credit Card	-	33.54
New Equipment Purchased - Immediate Asset Write Off	-	1,542.73
Total Other Expenses	-	1,576.27
<hr/>		
Utilities		
Telephone & Internet	-	136.36
Total Utilities	-	136.36
<hr/>		
Total Expenditure	253,118.62	178,073.97
<hr/>		
Net Current Year Surplus/(Loss)	123,362.82	65,056.40

Movements in Equity

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated For the year ended 31 May 2023

	2023	2022
Members Funds		
Opening Balance	522,214.46	457,158.06
Increases		
Profit for the Period	123,362.82	65,056.40
Total Increases	123,362.82	65,056.40
Total Members Funds	645,577.28	522,214.46

Assets and Liabilities Statement

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated
As at 31 May 2023

	NOTES	31 MAY 2023	31 MAY 2022
Assets			
Current Assets			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	3	647,297.75	521,803.28
Trade and Other Receivables	4	3,319.80	1,364.00
Total Current Assets		650,617.55	523,167.28
Total Assets		650,617.55	523,167.28
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Trade and Other Payables	5	4,515.25	-
GST Payable		525.02	952.82
Total Current Liabilities		5,040.27	952.82
Total Liabilities		5,040.27	952.82
Net Assets		645,577.28	522,214.46
Member's Funds			
Accumulated Surplus (Deficit)		645,577.28	522,214.46
Total Member's Funds		645,577.28	522,214.46

Notes to the Financial Statements

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated For the year ended 31 May 2023

1. Basis of Preparation

Compliance with Prescribed Requirements

In the Committee's opinion, the Association is not a reporting entity because there are no users dependent on a general purpose financial report. The financial report is therefore a special purpose financial report that has been prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and the constitution of the entity and Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)*.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the disclosure requirements of AASB 101 Presentation of Financial Statements, ASB 108 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors and AASB 1054 Australian Additional Disclosures and the significant accounting policies as detailed below.

Principal Activities

The Association is a not-for-profit entity involved in the advocating and promoting awareness of the need for equitable access to educational opportunities for families in regional and remote areas in Australia.

The Association does not control other entities. The financial statements include the value of all income, expenses, assets, liabilities and equity for the Association as an individual entity.

Underlying Measurement Basis

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on historic costs and do not take into account changing money values or, except where stated specifically, current valuations of non-current assets.

Other Presentation Matters

Currency

Amounts included in the financial statements are in Australian dollars.

Comparative Figures

Comparative information reflects the audited 2023 financial statements.

Current / Non-Current Classification

Assets and liabilities are classified as either 'current' or 'non-current' in the Statement of Financial Position and associated notes. Assets are classified as 'current' where their carrying amount is expected to be realised within 12 months after the reporting date.

Liabilities are classified as 'current' when they are due to be settled within 12 months after the reporting date, or the Association does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement to beyond 12 months after the reporting date. All other assets and liabilities are classified as non-current.

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless stated otherwise, have been adopted in the preparation of these financial statements.

Income Tax

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and the organisation has been endorsed by the Australian Tax Office to be income tax exempt.

Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand, deposits held on call with banks, other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts.

Accounts Receivable and Other Debtors

Accounts receivable and other debtors include amounts due from members as well as amounts receivable from donors. Receivables expected to be collected within 12 months of the end of the reporting period are classified as current assets. All other receivables are classified as non-current assets.

Revenue and Other Income

Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable after taking into account any trade discounts and volume rebates allowed. For this purpose, deferred consideration is not discounted to present values when recognising revenue.

Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest method, which for floating rate financial assets is the rate inherent in the instrument. Dividend revenue is recognised when the right to receive a dividend has been established.

Grant and donation income is recognised when the entity obtains control over the funds, which is generally at the time of receipt.

If conditions are attached to the grant that must be satisfied before the association is eligible to receive the contribution, recognition of the grant as revenue will be deferred until those conditions are satisfied.

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the assets and liabilities statement.

Accounts Payable and Other Payables

Accounts payable and other payables represent the liability outstanding at the end of the reporting period for goods and services received by the association during the reporting period that remain unpaid. The balance is recognised as a current liability with the amounts normally paid within 30 days of recognition of the liability.

2023

2022

3. Cash and Cash Equivalents

52nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

	2023	2022
Bank Accounts		
Business Saver Account	521,896.14	430,624.46
Department of Education Grant	28,502.40	40,673.46
Everday Account	25,576.65	7,665.30
General Account	60,659.79	37,344.21
Membership Account	5,882.89	799.72
Tasmania State Council Trust	4,779.88	4,696.13
Total Bank Accounts	647,297.75	521,803.28
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	647,297.75	521,803.28

	2023	2022
4. Trade and Other Receivables		
Trade Receivables		
Trade Debtors	3,319.80	1,364.00
Total Trade Receivables	3,319.80	1,364.00
Total Trade and Other Receivables	3,319.80	1,364.00

	2023	2022
5. Trade and Other Payables		
Trade Payables		
Trade Creditors	4,515.25	-
Total Trade Payables	4,515.25	-
Total Trade and Other Payables	4,515.25	-



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the members of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated
ABN: 38 908 782 315

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated (the registered entity), which comprises the assets and liabilities statement as at 31 May 2023, and the income and expenditure statement for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements including a summary of significant accounting policies, statement by members of the committee and the financial declaration for responsible person.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements of the registered entity has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)* and Division 80 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (ACNC Act)*, including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the registered entity's financial position as at 31 May 2023 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (ii) complying with the Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Notes 1 & 2, and Division 80 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the registered entity in accordance with the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)*, the ACNC Act and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110: *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Notes 1 & 2 to the financial statements, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial statements has been prepared to assist the registered entity meet the requirements of the ACNC Act and the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)*. As a result, the financial statements may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of the Committee for the Financial Statements

The committee of the registered entity are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements that gives a true and fair view in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Notes 1 & 2, the ACNC Act and the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)*. The responsibility of the registered entity also includes such internal control as the committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial statements that gives a true and fair view that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the committee is responsible for assessing the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the committee either intends to liquidate the registered entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The committee is responsible for overseeing the registered entity's financial reporting process.



Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial statements.

As part of our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis of our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusions, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design and audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the registered entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the committee.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the committee's use of going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, modify our audit opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the registered entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the committee regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Queensland Audit Services
A Member of CPA Australia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kent Gripske'.

Kent Gripske CPA
Audit Partner

Dalby QLD

Date: 28 June 2023

52nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MEMBERSHIP at 31 May 2023

Western Australia	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Esperance	27	21	22	16	12	17
Gascoyne	18	11	15	8	8	28
Goldfields Eyre (<i>Kalgoorlie Air</i>)	12	19	19	17	12	12
Eastern Districts <i>formerly Hyden</i>	46	38	44	40	34	7
Kimberley Air	12	9	9	11	9	17
Kondinin	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed
Lakes District	44	44	47	46	37	4
Meekatharra Air	16	20	20	16	15	31
Midwest	49	46	52	46	47	20
Pilbara	17	17	20	20	11	43
WA Lone Members	36	24	24	18	17	20
Yalgoo	9	7	7	5	2	14
Central Wheatbelt North <i>formerly Kalannie</i>	29	18	18	7	12	5
	315	274	297	250	216	218

South Australia	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Eyre	0	8	8	4	18	16
Far West	0	0	recess	recess	recess	0
Flinders Ranges	26	24	24	22	23	41
Marla Oodnadatta	10	10	10	8	10	11
Marree Air	13	10	10	6	9	9
North East Districts	18	16	17	15	17	13
North West	11	11	11	10	11	9
Port Augusta	8	9	10	11	14	9
SA Lone Members	16	7	7	15	97	13
	102	95	97	91	121	121

Tasmania	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Central Highlands	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	
East Coast	18	7	7			
Midlands (<i>Oatlands</i>)	14	9	9			
TAS Lone Members	8	7	8			
Tasmania <i>merged East Coast, Midlands, Tas Lones</i>				12	10	14
	40	23	24	12	10	14

Northern Territory	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Alice Springs	51	41	43	49	41	46
Barkly	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed
Katherine	64	52	53	80	45	58
Territory Wide <i>formerly NT Lone Members</i>	14	12	13	19	18	21
	129	105	109	148	104	125

52nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

New South Wales	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Balranald	47	39	45	41	32	24
Boomi	19	18	18	13	12	11
Bourke	29	29	32	28	35	25
Brewarrina	19	14	16	18	14	14
Broken Hill	37	33	35	32	34	24
Bullarah <i>amalgamated with Moree</i>	12	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed
Central West Plains (<i>Tottenham</i>)	92	95	96	71	63	58
Collarenebri-Mungindi	19	15	24	17	15	14
Cobar	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess
Condobolin	13	8	9	8	5	8
Corinella	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess
Goolgowi	13	13	13	15	8	2
Hay	74	57	69	80	77	47
Hillston	recess	6	8	11	10	14
Lightning Ridge/Goodooga	9	10	10	7	6	7
Lord Howe Island	11	11	11	10	13	14
Louth	24	23	23	25	27	18
Monaro	31	29	30	21	15	20
Moree <i>amalgamated Bullarah</i>	24	33	39	46	36	34
Namoi (<i>Burren Junction</i>)	48	42	45	51	36	31
North West Slopes	8	9	11	9	8	7
NSW Lone Member	122	109	117	136	108	71
Nyngan	25	23	24	21	23	25
Paroo	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess
Quambone	35	40	41	31	30	32
Rankins Springs	25	26	29	28	20	25
Tibooburra/Milparinka	14	18	18	8	9	16
Vermont Hill	10	6	6	6	5	4
Walgett	43	35	39	27	31	37
Warrumbungle	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess
Wentworth	24	26	28	30	20	22
West Wyalong	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess
	827	767	836	790	692	604

52nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Queensland	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Alpha	32	22	28	32	35	28
Aramac-Muttaburra	35	32	32	33	36	30
Arcadia Valley	18	9	12	14	14	12
Auburn-Burrandowan-Cardarga	32	28	28	16	11	10
Augathella	22	17	22	20	16	15
Belyando-Mt Coolon	49	40	42	45	40	46
Blackall	34	29	29	44	31	29
Bollon	16	19	19	19	14	17
Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville	15	14	15	12	10	12
Capricornia (BOTA)	22	29	33	29	20	17
Channel Country	5	1	1	1	1	3
Charleville	20	24	25	34	31	27
Charters Towers	56	55	67	59	60	72
Clarke Creek	18	23	26	28	26	22
Clermont	55	53	54	49	42	49
Cloncurry	10	16	16	12	14	17
Cunnamulla	28	22	24	31	16	20
Dawson Valley	17	13	15	25	32	32
Dirranbandi	29	32	32	27	26	23
Far North QLD (<i>Cairns Radio</i>)	32	9	14	25	23	32
Hughenden	16	17	17	23	23	24
Julia Creek	32	27	28	33	34	50
Kindon	31	30	32	32	34	35
Longreach	38	16	28	24	24	24
McKinlay	0	4	5	6	9	8
Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld	34	34	40	30	26	26
Moonie	25	24	26	31	28	21
Mt Isa BOTA	35	30	36	33	46	55
Nebo	9	20	22	15	17	20
North Burnett (<i>Eidsvold-Cracow</i>)	18	13	13	7	12	12
QLD Lone Members	25	20	22	12	10	10
Quilpie	32	14	14	17	14	17
Richmond	17	19	20	31	33	27
Roma	30	28	33	40	35	41
Southern Downs (<i>Stanthorpe District</i>)	31	30	32	29	28	30
Springsure-Rolleston	21	17	21	25	24	29
St George	49	46	52	43	28	25
Talwood	9	23	24	23	24	24
Tambo	27	27	41	36	34	44
Taroom-Wandoan	39	43	44	43	38	35
Thargomindah	1	0	5	10	8	7
Western Downs (<i>Condamine-WD</i>)	37	40	41	40	30	21
Westmar-Inglestone	53	53	55	46	44	39
Winton	40	29	29	32	31	35
Yaraka-Isisford	31	32	34	39	35	29
	1235	1123	1248	1255	1167	1201

52nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Australia Wide Membership Totals	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
New South Wales	827	767	836	790	739	604
Northern Territory	129	105	109	148	124	125
Queensland	1235	1123	1248	1255	1265	1201
South Australia	102	95	97	91	121	121
Tasmania	40	23	24	12	14	14
Western Australia	315	274	297	250	240	218
	<u>2648</u>	<u>2387</u>	<u>2611</u>	<u>2546</u>	<u>2503</u>	<u>2283</u>
Corporate	1	4	3	4	5	4
School Corporate			5	10	10	9

Financial Branches 31/05/2023	
New South Wales	25
Northern Territory	3
Queensland	44
South Australia	8
Tasmania	1
Western Australia	12
	95

52nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Chair: Alana Moller

Secretary: Kim Hughes

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____